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DISTRICT
GAZETTEERS

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BIRBHUM.

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BIRBHUM

BY

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GAZETTEER

OF THE

BIRBHUM DISTRICT.

CHAPTER I

PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

BIRBHUM, the northernmost district of the Burdwān Division, is situated between 23° 33′ and 24° 35′ north latitude and between 87° 10′ and 88° 2′ east longitude. It extends over 1,752 square miles, and has a population, according to the census of 1901, of 902,280 persons. One of the smallest districts in Bengal, it has a larger area than the county of Lancaster, and its population is nearly as great as that of Kent. The principal town, which is also the administrative head-quarters of the district, is Surī, situated two miles south of the Mor river.

Origin of name.

Several theories have been put forward regarding the derivation of the name Bīrbhūm. According to Sir William Hunter, it means the land of heroes (*Vīrbhūmi*),* and another suggestion is that it signifies forest land, *bir* in Santāli meaning jungle.† A third derivation is connected with the traditional history of the district. It is said that once upon a time the Rājā of Bishnupur went out hawking in this part of his kingdom. He threw off one of the birds in pursuit of a heron, which turned upon its pursuer with great fury and came off victorious. This unusual occurrence excited the surprise of the king, who imagined that it must have been due to some mysterious quality in the soil: that the soil was, in fact, *vīr māti* (*i.e.*, vigorous soil), and that whatever might be brought forth by that soil would be endowed with heroic energy and power. Thereupon he named it Vīrbhūmi. More probably, however, the local explanation is the correct one, viz., that Bīrbhūm means simply the territory of the Bīr Rājās,

* Annals of Rural Bengal.

† J. A. S. B. Vol. XL (1870), p. 111.

Bīr being the title borne by its early Hindu rulers, just as Mān, Singh, and Dhal were the titles of the chiefs of Mānbhūm, Singhbhūm and Dhalbhūm.

nd- s. Bīrbhūm is bounded on the north and west by the Santāl Parganas and the district of Murshidābād; on the east by the districts of Murshidābād and Burdwān; and on the south by Burdwān, from which it is separated by the Ajai river.

figura- n. The district is a triangular tract of country (like Great Britain in shape) bisected longitudinally by the loop line of the East Indian Railway, which runs due north and south through it. The apex is situated at its northern extremity not far south of the point where the Ganges and the hills of the Santāl Parganas begin to diverge, the hills gradually trending away to the south-west and the Ganges to the south-east. Roughly speaking, the triangle thus formed, with the river Ajai as its base, constitutes the district. Its western boundary, though following the line of the hills, lies at a short but variable distance from their foot. The eastern boundary is also separated from the Ganges by a strip of country some ten to fifteen miles broad on its western bank.

Throughout almost the entire area of the district the surface is broken by a succession of undulations, the general trend of which is from north-west to south-east. Near the western boundary they rise into high ridges of laterite, separated by valleys a mile or more in width. To the south-east these upland ridges are less pronounced, while the valleys become narrower, and gradually merge into the broad alluvial plains of the Gangetic delta. The larger ridges are covered with thick but stunted *sāl* forest, only the bottoms of the valleys being cultivated. As they become less steep, rice is grown in terraces up the sides, and only the broad, flat, and usually dry summits are left untilled, forming in the rains scanty pasture grounds. The minor undulations are terraced up to the top.

The rapidity with which hills change to ridges, ridges to undulations, and undulations to level country varies considerably. In the extreme north of the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision the ridges are high and amount almost to hills, but they cease abruptly, and throughout the greater part of the Nalhāti and Rāmpur Hāt thānas the surface, almost from the foot of the hills, is only slightly undulating. The unbroken deltaic plain is not, however, met with till beyond the eastern boundary of the district. In the Nalhāti thāna there are eight small detached hillocks of basaltic formation, the highest of which is known as Mathurkhāli Pahāri. The western portions of the Mayūreswar and Surī thānas

are covered with high ridges extending many miles to the south-east, but whereas in the northern part of this tract they are succeeded at once by perfectly level ground, on the south of the valley of the Mor they sink into undulations, and, after nearly disappearing, rise again to the dimensions of low hills. The ridges on the south bank of the Mor pass into flat country east of Surī, but swell into well-raised uplands near Sainthiā. Further east the undulations extend beyond the railway line some miles east of Lābpur, and even south of Bolpur, where it runs through a deep cutting of laterite rock. Along the north of the Ajai, to the south of Lābpur and Bolpur, the country is absolutely flat. The hollows between the ridges form natural drainage channels, which in the wider valleys are streams of considerable volume and in a few cases expand into broad rivers, which even within Bīrbhūm have a small and shallow current throughout the greater part of the year.

RIVER SYSTEM.

The district is well drained by a number of rivers and rivulets running in nearly every case from west to east with a slight southerly inclination. Only two are rivers of any magnitude, *viz.*, the Mor and the Ajai, the latter of which marks the southern boundary, while the Mor runs through Bīrbhūm from west to east. Both rivers are of considerable size when they enter the district, their width varying, according to the configuration of the country, from two hundred yards to half a mile. In the dry weather their beds are broad expanses of sand with small streams trickling down the centre, but during the rainy season they grow much broader and deeper, and after a heavy downpour rise in a few hours, occasionally overtopping their banks and inundating the surrounding country. With the exception of these two waterways, none of the rivers are used for navigation. Between the bigger rivers are innumerable drainage channels known by the generic name of Kandar, of which the Chilla and the Ghorāmārā are of an appreciable size. In the western part of the district the rivers, being fenced in by high ridges or well-marked undulations of stiff laterite, keep fairly well within their permanent channels. Further eastward, however, where the country is level and the soil friable, exemplifications of the usual meandering of Indian rivers are to be found.

Ajai.

The Ajai first touches the district at its south-west corner, and follows a winding course in an easterly direction, till it enters Burdwān at the extreme south-eastern angle of Bīrbhūm, eventually falling into the Bhāgīrathī near Kātwā. In this portion of its course it is navigable for small boats during the rains. Its floods sometimes destroy the villages and crops on

its left bank, along which are some zamīndāri enbankments with a length of 6 miles.

Mor. The Mor enters Bīrbhūm from the Santāl Parganas near the village of Haripur and flows through the centre of the district from west to east, passing two miles north of Surī and forming the southern boundary of the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision. It leaves the district a little east of Ganutiā and joins the Dwārkā, which is itself a tributary of the Bhāgīrathī. As only descending boats can ply on this river, small canoes are built on its banks and floated down during freshets, but are unable to return owing to the velocity of the current. At Ganutiā, east of Sainthiā, the Mor has before now given considerable trouble by altering its course, cutting into the roads and threatening to sweep away the celebrated old silk filature at that place. The Mor is also called the Morakhi, a corruption of Mayūrakshi "the peacock-eyed," *i.e.*, having water as lustrous as the eye of a peacock. In one portion of its course it is known as the Kānā.

Hinglā and Bakreswar. Between the Mor and the Ajai there are a few large streams coming from beyond the western boundary, of which the Hinglā is the most important. It enters the district from the Santāl Parganas some eight miles north of the Ajai, flows through the Dubrājpur thāna, and, gradually approaching that river, unites with it at Chaplā, after a course in Bīrbhūm of about fifteen miles. The greater part of this tract is drained by a series of small streams, which rise within the district, and, gradually converging from the numerous depressions into which the country is here longitudinally divided, fall into the Bakreswar. The latter rises at the hot springs of the same name near Tāntipārā, some ten miles west of Surī, and after following a zigzag course eastwards, and receiving one by one the waters of almost all the rivulets of south Bīrbhūm, joins the Mor a few miles beyond the eastern boundary of the district. It is at first a trifling brook trickling between two low ridges, and in the hot weather almost dry throughout its course; but where it crosses the East Indian Railway near Ahmadpur, it is, when in flood, as wide as the Thames at Richmond and further east is not inferior in volume to that river at London Bridge.

Other rivers. The Brāhmanī is a river of the same type as the Mor, but on a smaller scale. It enters the district at Nārāyanpur, bisects the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision, passing under the railway two miles south of Nalhāti, and falls into the Dwārkā in the Murshidābād district. The Bānsloi in the north and the Dwārkā in the south of the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision, and the more sluggish Pāglā between the Bānsloi and the Brāhmanī, are smaller rivers of the

same kind and follow similar courses. The Bānsloi, coming from the west, flows two miles north of Murarai police-station and falls into the Bhāgīrathī opposite Jangipur in the district of Murshidābād. It is a hill stream which is apt to overflow after heavy rainfall. The Dwārkā or Bāblā is a long narrow stream also coming from the Santāl Parganas. It flows northwards through thānas Mayūreswar and Rāmpur Hāt and then turns east into the Murshidābād district, where it joins the Bhāgīrathī.

The Sāl or Kopā rises near the western boundary of the district a few miles north of the Hinglā, runs parallel with that river and the Ajai for thirty miles, and then, turning in a northerly direction, falls into the Dwārka ten miles before the latter leaves the district. This river is deep, and its banks are high **Sāl or Kopā.**

The eastern portion of the district is a continuation of the rice plain of Western Bengal, and the vegetation is that characteristic of rice fields in Bengal generally; species of Aponogeton, Utricularia, Drosera, Dopatrium, Ilysanthes, Hydrolea, Sphenoclea and similar aquatic or palustrine genera being abundant. In the drier undulating country to the west the characteristic shrubs and herbs include species of Wendlandia, Evolvulus, Stipa, Tragus, Perotis, Spermacoce, Zizyphus, Capparis and other similar plants affecting a laterite soil. Round villages are the usual clumps of mango trees, palms, bamboos and other trees, among which species of the fig family, jack and *arjun* (Terminalia arjuna) are often present. On the borders of the Santāl Parganas the remains of forest are found containing *sāl* (Shorea robusta), *piār* (Buchanania latifolia), *dhau* (Anogeissus latifolia), *kend* (Diospyros melanoxylon) and *mahuā* (Bassia latifolia). **BOTANY.**

Here, as elsewhere, the work of denudation has long gone on. "There can be no doubt," wrote, some 40 years ago, a gentleman who was well acquainted with the district, "that the unrestricted clearing of the jungles has had great influence in decreasing the annual amount of rain and impoverishing the country. What about half a century ago was thick jungle and waving plains of grass, is now almost a sterile and barren waste. Wherever the land was fit for cultivation, it was ploughed up. The successive rains have washed away the soil of the uplands, and have left only a bed of *kunkury* earth on which nothing will grow. It is only in the valleys, where there is paddy cultivation, that there is any good soil to be found. To the paddy *khet* ridges (raised to keep in the water-supply) it is owing that the soil of the valleys has not been carried into the rivers. Wherever a house, garden or

mango tope has been surrounded by a "bund," so as to keep in the rain-water, the soil again collects, and these "bunded" portions of the district become the oasis in the surrounding deserts."*

FAUNA. The carnivora of the district consist of leopards, bears, wolves and other smaller species The ungualata are represented by wild pigs. Leopards are not numerous, but are found in some jungles, chiefly in the Chaupahāri jungle in thāna Ilāmbazar, and in the Charicha jungle. Bears are very rare, but sometimes they migrate from the neighbouring hills in the Santāl Parganas, and visit the country to the west of Rājnagar, when the *mahuā* trees are in flower. Wolves are sometimes met with in small patches of jungle; their depredations are mainly confined to cattle, sheep and goats. Wild pigs are found in isolated tracts, especially along river banks and in jungles traversed by water-courses. They are mostly killed by Santāls during their great annual hunts or drives in the dry weather. Besides the above, the long-tailed ape called *hanumān* (Semnopithecus entellus), otters, hares, foxes and jackals are common; in some parts of the district the *hanumān* does considerable damage to growing crops, as well as to the thatch of houses.

Game birds. The game birds of the district chiefly consist of partridges, green pigeons and various water-fowl. The grey partridge is plentiful, and green pigeons may usually be seen on the highest branches of *pipal* trees when they are bearing fruit. Among water-fowl, comb and Brāhmanī duck are found in abundance. Geese are cold weather visitors, coming in large flocks to feed on the rice crops. Snipe are found in great numbers in swampy places and in the beds of rivers, and are most common in the east of the district.

Fish. The principal rivers of the district, the Ajai and the Mor, contain *rui*, *kātlā* and sometimes *hilsā*. Tanks, which are numerous in the district, are stocked with *rui*, *kātlā*, *mirgel*, *magur*, *koi* and other small fish. Alligators have been seen in tanks near Mayūreswar.

GEOLOGY. The geological formations represented in Bīrbhūm are Archaean gneiss, the Gondwāna system, laterite, and Gangetic alluvium. The gneiss belongs to the division designated Bengal gneiss, which is remarkable for the great variety of rocks which it contains. The Gondwāna system is represented by the Barākar subdivision of the lower Gondwāna. Coal-measures are found in this latter subdivision, which forms the small Tangsuli

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* Lt.-Col. J. E. Gastrell, *Report on the District of Bānkurā* (1863), p. 5.

coal-field on the northern bank of the Mor river at the northern edge of the Rānīganj coal-fields. The coal in those outcrops is scanty and of poor quality, and as a rule, is scarcely more than a carbonaceous shale. Ferruginous laterite occupies large area in the valleys of the Mor and Ajai rivers.

The country in the south-east of the district is an alluvial plain, with a soil composed of dark clay or sand and clay. Proceeding towards the west, and for some distance before the East Indian Railway line is reached, patches of reddish clay and gravel are seen, while the ground gradually rises, and becomes irregular and broken. Here calcareous nodules, called *ghutin*, are found mixed with clay, coarse sand, or ferruginous gravel. Proceeding further westwards, the ground becomes more elevated and broken into irregular ridges, the coloured clay giving place to a reddish brown gravel and laterite rock. In some places a few feet of alluvial deposit cover the laterite; in other parts coarse sand and *ghutin* are seen through a break under a few feet of ferruginous rock. The country has thus a gentle undulating and uneven or irregular character, with rounded ridges interrupted by dips, depressions and waterways.

The laterite occurs in the form of gravel and of rock. The surface of the ground to the depth of four or five feet is composed of reddish-brown gravel, below which is the rock laterite, which varies in thickness from 6 to 20 or 30 feet. This laterite, when first exposed, is rather soft, though it is cut with difficulty; but after exposure to the air for some time it becomes hard and foveolar like a honey-comb. In some places this rock is found on the surface and may extend laterally for several hundred feet in one block, and it is then of a darker colour. After cutting through this rock a bed of clay is met with, below which gneiss is found at variable depths,

Granitic veins traverse the district in many places, and occasionally crop up at the surface, the depth being at various angles and the strike from east to west. There is a curious mass of granite at Dubrājpur about 15 miles south-west of the civil station of Surī. The rock rises perpendicularly to the height of 30 or 40 feet, and is broken up or split into numerous irregular massive fragments from the action of sun and rain. The blocks are rounded, water-worn and of a dark brown colour externally, but when freshly broken, present a light brown or reddish colour. A few large granite boulders are also found in the vicinity. Sulphurous springs are found in the Bakreswar stream about eight miles west of Surī; some are hot and others are cold springs, and both kinds are found within a few feet of each other. The

water when first taken out of the springs has a strong odour of sulphur, but if kept in an open vessel for a few hours, it loses much of this sulphurous character, from which it would appear that the sulphur is not held in solution.

CLIMATE. The climate of the district is generally dry, mild and healthy. The hot weather usually lasts from the middle of March to the middle of June, the rainy season from the middle of June to the middle of October, and the cold weather from the middle of October to the middle of March. They do not always correspond to these limits, as frequently the rains do not set in before the end of June, and the cold weather not before the middle of November. During the months of April and May and in the first half of June the heat is for the most part intense, while the beginning and termination of the rainy season are generally oppressively close, cloudy and sultry. The cold season is moderately cold and bracing, almost always with a clear sky and very little rainfall. The heat, however, in the sun's rays is considerable. As a rule, the wind is from the south-east in summer and from the north-west in winter.

The following table shows for the cold, hot and rainy seasons the rainfall recorded at the different registering stations, the figures representing the averages in each case:—

STATION.	Years recorded.	November to February.	March to May.	June to October.	Total.
SURI ...	45—49	1·80	5·18	50·05	57·03
BOLPUR ...	15—16	1·89	6·96	45·29	54·14
HETAMPUR ...	25—26	1·90	5·35	48·72	55·97
LABPUR ...	6—7	0·87	5·89	45·94	52·70
MURARAI ...	10—13	1·24	5·78	51·22	58·24
RAMPUR HÂT ...	27—28	1·89	6·14	48·49	56·52
Averages ...		1·60	5·88	48·29	55·77

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY.

At the dawn of history, part of the district as now constituted appears to have been included in the tract of country known as Rādha, and part in the tract called Vajjabhūmi. The traditions of the Jainas state that Mahāvīra, their last great Tīrthankara, wandered through these two tracts in the 5th century B. C.; and the description of them would seem to show that the eastern part of the district, with its alluvial soil, well watered by rivers, formed part of Rādha, while the wilder and more rugged country to the west was aptly known as Vajjabhūmi, *i.e.*, the country of the thunderbolt. A graphic description of the country is given in the *Avārānga-sūtta*, one of the oldest Jaina scriptures, which says that Mahāvīra "travelled in the pathless countries of the Lādhas, in Vajjabhūmi and Subbhabhūmi; he used there miserable beds and miserable seats. Even in the faithful part of the rough country the dogs bit him and ran at him; few people kept off the attacking, biting dogs. Striking the monk, they cried out *chu-chu* and made the dogs bite him. Such were the inhabitants. Many other mendicants, eating rough food in Vajjabhūmi and carrying about a strong pole, lived there. Even thus armed, they were bitten by the dogs, torn by the dogs. It is difficult to travel in Lādha."* EARLY HISTORY.

Rādha was part of the territory ruled over by the Mauryan Emperors, and was subsequently included in the empire of the Imperial Guptas, of Sasānka and of Harshavardhana. After the dismemberment of Harsha's empire there is no light on its history for 2½ centuries, but in the 10th century A. D. it evidently was included in the Pāla kingdom, and formed part of it until the middle of the 12th century, when the overlordship passed to the Sena kings. That Bīrbhūm acknowledged their sway is apparent from the fact that Jayadeva, the composer of the famous lyric *Gita Govinda*, who was a poet at the court of Lakshmana Sena in the latter half of the 12th century, was born

* M. M. Chakravarti, *Notes on the Geography of Old Bengal*, J. A. S. B. (1908), pp. 285-86.

and lived for some time at Kenduli on the Ajai river in this district.* Regarding this poem Mr. R. C. Dutt writes as follows in *The Literature of Bengal*: "Centuries have rolled away, and the fame of Jayadeva remains undiminished; and will continue to remain so long as the Sanskrit language is not forgotten. . . . The Bengali was no doubt the spoken tongue of Bengal at the time of Jayadeva, as it is now. But the learned and the *elite* still considered the Sanskrit tongue as their noble heritage, and authors vied with each other in writing in this language. All learned works, therefore, all speeches in court, all traditional and genealogical fables, were composed and recited in Sanskrit. Learned Brâhmans carried on their investigations in this learned language, and poets, desirous of ingratiating themselves with kings, composed and pronounced stiff artificial poetry in a dead language. All attempts in a foreign tongue or in a dead tongue must necessarily be feeble; and thus, with the single exception of Jayadeva's works, all compositions of the 12th century have been forgotten, and deservedly forgotten. The *Gita Govinda*, however, is an exception and a noble exception."

ARLY UHAM-ADAN ULE.

In the 13th century A. D. the district passed under the rule of the Muhammadans, and according to some authorities, Lakhanor (or Lakhnur), an important frontier post of he Musalmān territory, lay within its limits. From the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* we learn that Ghiās-ud-dīn Iwaz (1211-26) caused an embankment to be built from Lakhnautī (Gaur) to Devikot in Dinājpur on one side and to Lakhanor on the other, a ten days' march, because in the rains the whole country was inundated and it was impossible to move across the numerous swamps and morasses. Stewart identifies Lakhanor with Nagar, while Professor Blochmann suggests that it may be Lakrakund near Dubrājpur, both places in this district; but neither theory is quite satisfactory, as Lakhanor lay in low marshy country liable to be flooded, whereas both Nagar and Lakrakund are situated on high rocky ground, in which an embanked road would not have been necessary.†

For many centuries the control of the Muhammadans over the western part of the district appears to have been merely nominal, and the country was left under the rule of Hindu chiefs, called Bīr Rājās. An interesting account of this portion of the district

*R. C. Dutt, *Literature of Bengal* (1895), pp. 12-13; M. M. Chakravarti, *Sanskrit Literature of Bengal during the Sena rule*, J. A. S. B. (1906), pp. 163-69.

† C. Stewart, *History of Bengal* (1847), p. 35; H. Blochmann, *Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal*, J. A. S. B. (1873), pp. 211-12, 222-23; M. M. Chakravarti, *Disputed or doubtful events in the history of Bengal*, J. A. S. B. (1908), pp. 153-58.

is given in the *Brahmānda* section of the *Bhavishvat Purāna*, a work probably composed in the 15th or 16th century. "Nārīkhanda is a district abounding in thickets. It lies west of the Bhāgīrathī, north of the Dwārikeswari river. It extends along the Pānchakuta hills on its west, and approaches Kikata on the north. The forests are very extensive, chiefly of *sakhota*, *arjuna*, and *sāl* trees, with a plentiful addition of brushwood. The district is celebrated for the shrine of Baidyanāth. The deity is worshipped by people from all quarters, and is the source of every good in the present age. In the division of Vīrabhūmi the no less eminent form of the same divinity, named Bakreswara, is present in the world. Three-fourths of the district are jungle; the remaining fourth is cultivated. The soil of a small part of it is very fertile; but far the greater portion is saline and unproductive. There is no want of water, and numerous small streams run through the forest; the principal of these is the Ajaya. In many places there are iron mines. The people are in general small, black, and of immoral propensities and ignorant of religious duties; a few only are attached to the name of Vishnu. They are dexterous bowmen and industrious cultivators. In that part of the district called Vīradesa is the city of Nagara; also Sipulya, and other towns." From this account it appears that Nagar was the head-quarters of the Hindu rulers, and that the country was known as Vīradesa or Vīrabhūmi, the modern Bīrbhūm.

The eastern portion near the Bhāgīrathī river was, however, subject to the Musalmāns; and evidence of their possession is found in an old Bādshāhi road, which ran from Lakhnautī to Mangalkot (just across the south-eastern border) and thence to Burdwān and Sātgāon. Traces of this road, which is known locally as the Gaur-Bādshāhi road, can still be seen in the south-eastern extremity of the district, and near it an Arabic inscription has been found referring to the digging of a well by King Husain Shāh in 922 H. (1516 A.D.).*

MUGHAL RULE.

From the rent-roll of Todar Mal, which shows the territory held by the Muhammadans during the period of Afghān supremacy (1546-73), it is clear that by the middle of the 16th century the district had been brought entirely under their rule. This extension of their power was apparently due to the fact that, before and after the time of Sher Shāh, Muhammadan *jāgirdārs* had been settled in the district as a standing militia to protect it against the inroads of the wild tribes of Jharkhand, *i.e.*, Chotā

* J. A. S. B., 1861. p. 390.

Nāgpur.* Under Akbar the district as now constituted was divided among three *Sarkārs*, viz., a northern section in Audumbar, a central-eastern section in Sharifābād, and the rest of the district in Mandāran. The *Sarkār* last named included *parganas* Bīrbhūm and Nagar, the last of which had a large revenue (4,025,620 *dams* or Rs. 1,00,640) and evidently had an extensive area. In *Sarkār* Audumbar one *mahāl* with a considerable revenue was called Mūdesar, which is suspected to be a corruption of Mayūreswar, a place on the bank of the Mor river with a well-known temple.

During the struggles of the Mughals and Afghāns for supremacy in Bengal, the old Bādshāhi road must have witnessed many a strange scene. Over it Dāūd Khān fled to Orissa in 1574 A.D. hotly pursued by Todar Mal, who first won fame as a general and then enhanced it by his skill as a financier. On the death of Akbar's Viceroy, Munim Khān, in 1575, Dāūd Khān again marched over it in triumph to the Bengal capital, Tānda, and next year the shattered remnants of his army retreated along it to the south. During the great military revolt the district was lost to Akbar, and several years passed before it could be reconquered. At length, in 1600, its fate was decided by a momentous battle fought within its borders between the Mughals and the Afghāns. During the temporary absence of the Viceroy Mān Singh, the Afghans had risen under Usman Khān, defeated the imperial forces, and occupied the greater portion of Bengal. Mān Singh hastened back, defeated them at Sherpur Atai in the east of this district, and forced them to retire precipitately to Orissa. Nearly a quarter of a century later (1624) Prince Khurram, afterwards the Emperor Shāh Jahān, in his revolt against his father, marched over the Bādshāhi road towards Rājmahāl, driving the weak forces of the Bengal Nawāb before him, and a year later he retired hurriedly along it on his way to the Deccan.

After this the Bādshāhi road does not appear to have been a highway for contending armies until the revolt of Subha Singh and Rahīm Shāh in 1696, when the rebel army hurried West Bengal from Midnapore to Rājmahāl. Defeated at Bhagwāngolā, Rahīm Shāh fled to Burdwān, while the new Viceroy, Prince Azīm-us-Shān, moved slowly over this road from Rājmahāl to Burdwān being joined *en route* by the various zamīndārs and *Faujdārs*. On the outskirts of Burdwān, he met the forces of Rahīm Shāh, who was defeated and killed; and with his death the revolt came to an end.

* H. Blochmann, *Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal*, J. A. S. B., 1873, p. 222-3.

MARÁTHÁ RAIDS.

The land now had peace until the Marāthā invasions began in 1741, after which it was frequently raided by the Marāthās during their marches to and from Bengal. At one time the whole of Bīrbhūm appears to have been held by them with the rest of the country west of the Ganges from Rājmahāl on the north to Midnapore on the south; while only Murshidābād and the country east and north of the Ganges remained in the possession of Alī Vardi Khān.* "The Marāthās," writes Sir W. W. Hunter, "fell with their heaviest weight upon the border principalities of Bīrbhūm and Bishnupur. Tribute, free quarters, forced services, exactions of a hundred sorts, reduced the once powerful frontier houses to poverty; and their tenantry fled from a country in which the peasant had become a mere machine for growing food for the soldier. Burdwān not only lay farther inland, but its marshy and river-intersected surface afforded a less tempting field for cavalry, and a better shelter for the people. The Marāthās spent their energy in plundering the intervening frontier tracts of Bīrbhūm and Bishnupur, where the dry soil and fine undulating surface afforded precisely the riding-ground which their cavalry loved. There they could harry the villages exhaustively and in detail, by means of small parties." †

THE RÁJÁS OF BIRBHUM.

At this time the district was held by a line of Pathān chiefs, who, like the chiefs of Bishnupur in the Bānkurā district, were practically independent. The head of the family at the beginning of the century was Asad-ulla Khān (1697-1718), whose power is amply acknowledged by the Muhammadan historians. "The zamīndārs of Bīrbhūm and Bishnupur," says the *Riyazu-s-Salātin*, "being protected by dense forests, mountains and hills, did not personally appear before the Nawāb, but deputed instead their agents to carry on transactions on their behalf, and through them used to pay in the usual tributes, presents and gifts. In consideration of the fact that Asad-ulla, zamindār of Bīrbhūm, was a pious and saintly person and had bestowed half of his property as *madad-i-māsh* grants on learned, pious and saintly persons, and had fixed daily doles of charity for the poor and the indigent, the Khān refrained from molesting him." Stewart, again writing from Muhammadan records, says:—"The zamīndār of Bīrbhūm was a popular and virtuous character, named Asad Ulla, an Afghān Chief, who, with his followers, undertook to defend this territory against the wild mountaineers of Jarcund. This person dedicated half his income to charitable purposes, either in supporting the religious and learned, or in relieving the distresses of the poor

* *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*, I, 394-96, 419.

† Statistical Account of Bengal, IV 19.

and needy. He was besides attentive to all the duties of his religion and deviated not from the ordinances of the law. To have attacked such a character would have exposed the Nawāb to great opprobrium, and would have incited against him the popular clamour, and possibly would have injured him in the esteem of every devout Musalman. . . These two zamīndārs (of Bīrbhūm and Bishnupur) having refused the summons to attend the court of Murshidābād, were permitted to remain on their own estates on condition of regularly remitting their assessment through an agent stationed at Murshidābād."

Asad-ulla Khān was succeeded by his son Badi-ul-Zamān Khān, who, like his father, refused to attend the court at Murshidābād, and rose in rebellion in 1737-38. The rebellion was quickly quelled, and he was punished by having to pay an increased revenue of 3 lakhs.* In spite of this check, the power of the Rājā steadily increased. According to the *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*:—" Among the zamīndārs in the kingdom of Bengal none was so near neighbour to the city of Murshidābād, its capital, as the Rājā of Bīrbhūm, and none so powerful, whether by the number of his troops or by his personal character for bravery. He likewise piqued himself upon a sense of honour and a delicacy of sentiments, qualifications very extraordinary in a zamīndār . . . The zamīndār, Badi-ul-Zamān Khān, who went by the name of Dīwānjī, had always been in his youth, as he was now even in his riper years, extremely addicted to his ease and to his pleasures; and it was to enjoy himself he had left the management of his dominions to Alī Naki Khān, the most capable of his sons, his whole ambition being to pass his days in quiet and enjoyment. But this hopeful son of his dying in the flower of his age, the father, who was already disgusted with the world, and deeply affected by the total ruin that had befallen Alī Vardi Khān's family, to which he was extremely attached, put on a *fakīr's* garb and placing at the head of his dominions Asad Zamān Khān, another son of his, but born to him from his Rānī or Princess, he retired again out of the tumult of affairs and seemed pleased with nothing but the conversation of *fakīrs*, and with retirement and tranquillity."† The family chronicles confirm this account by stating that Badi-ul-Zamān abdicated in favour of his third son Asad-ul-Zamān Khān.

Under Asad-ul-Zamān the fortunes of the house were at the zenith, for he was recognized as one of the most powerful princes

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* Stewart's *History of Bengal*, p. 269.

† *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*, II, 393-94.

of Bengal. Lord Clive, indeed, writing to the Select Committee a few days before the battle of Plassey, mentions the Rājā of Bīrbhūm with the Wazīr of Delhi and the Marāthās as powers with whom an alliance might be made.* At that battle Sirāj-ud-daula was assisted by a small party of 40 or 50 Frenchmen commanded by Monsieur St. Frais, formerly one of the Council at Chandernagore, with some artillery. After the battle St. Frais and his little band retreated to Bīrbhūm, where they were allowed to remain unmolested and were joined by many of their countrymen, who had either escaped from the French factories or from their nominal confinement in Calcutta, where not a few had broken their parole. In December 1757 the Rājā, on hearing that the English troops had taken the field, became alarmed on his own account, in consequence of the protection he had given to the French. He therefore sent out several bodies of troops to surround and seize them, but they got warning of his intentions and the greater portion contrived to escape; twenty-four, however, were made prisoners and sent to Calcutta.†

Three years later the Rājā took up arms against the British, having, with other powerful zamīndārs, sent an invitation to the Emperor Shāh Alam to enter the Province and promised to join his standard. In April 1760 the Emperor's force advanced into the district, closely pursued by the Nawāb's son Mīrān and Major Caillaud. Instead, however, of following the original plan and marching *viâ* Nagar and Surī to Murshidābād, which was unprotected, Shāh Alam marched south-east by Lakrakund towards Burdwān to meet the Nawāb's army. When, however, he was within reach of the Nawāb's army, he hesitated to attack; and in the meantime Caillaud and Mīrān effected a junction with his enemies at Mangalkot. Shāh Alam then retreated, finding that he had lost the chance of surprising Murshidābād and was unable to withstand the English troops.‡

At the end of the year, the Emperor having left the Province, the English and the Nawāb proceeded against the Rājā of Bīrbhūm, one body advancing under Captain Whyte from Midnapore, while Mīr Kāsim Alī Khān and his Armenian general Ghurghin Khān marched from Murshidābād with a considerable force, supported by a detachment under Major Yorke. Asad Zamān Khān deputed the government of his territory to his father as Dīwān, and taking the field with 5,000 horse and 20,000 foot, intrenched himself in a difficult part of the country near

* C. R. Hill, *Bengal in 1756-57*, Vol. I, p. cxcvii, and Vol. II, p. 418.

† Broome's *History of the Bengal Army*, pp. 181, 192.

‡ Broome's *History of the Bengal Army*, pp. 292-94.

Kherwah. His position being a strong one, Major Yorke directed Captain Whyte to take a circuitous route to the north-east and fall upon the rear of the Bīrbhūm troops, while he engaged their attention in front with his own and the Nawāb's troops. This duty Captain Whyte executed with such celerity, that he completely surprised the enemy, who, confident of the strength of their position, never anticipated the possibility of any attack in the rear, and were ignorant of the approach of the British troops until they found them in the centre of their camp. They were seized with panic and thrown into confusion; and the sound of the firing serving as a signal for Captain Yorke, he advanced with his detachment, followed at some distance by Mīr Kāsim Khān's troops, and carried the lines without difficulty. The enemy were completely defeated and fled in all directions after suffering very heavy loss. This victory effectually broke the power of the Bīrbhūm Rājā, whose territory, as well as that of Burdwān, was speedily subdued and pacified.*

EARLY BRITISH ADMINISTRATION.

The early period of British administration was a time of trouble for Bīrbhūm†. In 1770, five years after the grant of the Dīwāni to the East India Company, it was devastated by famine, the severity of which is apparent from the report submitted in February 1771 by Mr. Higginson, Supervisor of Bīrbhūm. Writing of the eastern *parganas*, which were most afflicted, he said:—"Truly concerned am I to acquaint you that the bad effects of the last famine appear in these places beyond description dreadful. Many hundreds of villages are entirely depopulated; and even in large towns there are not a fourth part of the houses inhabited. For want of ryots to cultivate the ground, there are immense tracts of a fine open country which remain wholly waste and unimproved." He begged that the Council would allow him to suspend the collection of arrears of revenue from "the remaining poor ryots, who have so considerably suffered from the late famine, that by far the greatest part of them are rendered utterly incapable of paying them. By obliging them to sell their cattle and utensils for agriculture, a small portion might be recovered; but this would certainly be the means of their deserting the province, and preventing the cultivation for next year, which would be much more fatal to the revenue of the

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* Broome's *History of the Bengal Army*, pp. 319-20, *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*, II, 395-96.

† This account of Early British Administration is extracted in a condensed form from Sir W. W. Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*, with some additions from Mr. E. G. Drake-Brockman's *Notes on the Early Administration of the District of Bīrbhūm* (1898).

country than the whole loss of the balances." The Council replied :—"Though we can by no means recede from the demands for mofussil balances due from your districts, yet we cannot but agree with you in the propriety of suspending them for the present, as continuing to harass the ryots for them at the present season would be attended with prejudice to the ensuing year's cultivation and collection. Should the approaching year, however, prove a prosperous one, we flatter ourselves an adjustment might be made for the recovery of these balances; and it is an object we must recommend to your attention in that event."

It took the district a long time to recover from the famine In 1771-72 it was reported that only 4,500 villages were left, whereas in 1765 there had been nearly 6,000. Much of the cultivated land had relapsed into jungle, through which, in 1780, a small body of sepoys could with difficulty force their way. "For 120 miles," says a contemporary newspaper correspondent, "they marched through an extensive wood, all the way a perfect wilderness; sometimes a small village presented itself in the midst of these jungles, with a little cultivated ground around it, hardly sufficient to encamp the two battalions. These woods abound with tigers and bears, which infested the camp every night." Distress and destitution drove the people to acts of lawlessness and violence, in which disbanded soldiers lent a willing hand, bands of dacoits gathering along the western borders and in the jungles across the Ajai. In May 1785, the Collector of Murshidābād, at the extremity of whose jurisdiction Bīrbhūm lay, formally declared the civil authorities "destitute of any force capable of making head against such an armed multitude," and petitioned for troops to act against bands of plunderers four hundred strong. A month later, the dacoits had grown to "near a thousand people," and were preparing for an organized invasion of the low lands. Next year (1786) they had firmly established themselves in Bīrbhūm, and occupied strong positions with permanent camps. The Rājā was unable to take any effective measures against them; the public revenues were intercepted on the way to the treasury; and the commercial operations of the Company within the district brought to a standstill, many factories being abandoned. It was clear that the system under which both Bīrbhūm and Bishnupur (the eastern portion of the Bānkurā district) were administered from Murshidābād could continue no longer, and that the anarchy prevailing demanded the presence of a responsible officer on the spot. Accordingly, in November 1786, a British civil officer,

Mr. G. R. Foley, was deputed to Bīrbhūm with orders to support the Rājā against the marauders.

Next year Lord Cornwallis determined to unite Bīrbhūm and Bishnupur into a compact British district; and in March 1787 a notification was issued in the *Calcutta Gazette* to the effect that Mr. Pye was "confirmed Collector of Bishenpore in addition to Beerbhoom heretofore superintended by G. R. Foley, Esq." Mr. Pye's tenure of office was brief, for he left the district in 1787; but even in this short time some towns in Bishnupur were sacked by banditti. His successor was Mr. Sherburne, during whose administration of a year and-a-half the head-quarters of the united district were transferred from Bishnupur to Surī. Short, however, as was his term of office, "the two frontier principalities had," according to Sir William Hunter, "passed from the condition of military fiefs into that of a regular British district administered by a Collector and covenanted assistants, defended by the Company's troops, studded with fortified factories, intersected by a new military road and possessing daily communication with the seat of Government in Calcutta." Towards the close of 1788 Mr. Sherburne was removed under suspicion of corrupt dealings, and Mr. Christopher Keating assumed charge of the district. For some time after his appointment a considerable armed force had to be maintained for the repression of the bands of dacoits along the western frontier, and under the title of Collector he discharged the functions of a commander-in-chief and civil governor within his jurisdiction. At the beginning of each cold weather when the great harvest of the year approached, he furnished the officer at the head of his troops with a list of passes which the sepoys were to defend until the robber bands should retire into quarters for the next rainy season. On a proposal being made to reduce the strength of his force, he plainly stated that he would not in that case be responsible for holding the district.

Mr. Keating had not held his post two months before he found himself compelled to call out the troops against a band of marauders, five hundred strong, who had made a descent on a market town within two hours' ride of Surī, and murdered or frightened away the inhabitants 'of between thirty and forty villages.' In February 1789 the hill men broke through the cordon of outposts *en masse*, and spread 'their depredations through the interior villages of the district.' The outposts were hastily recalled from the frontier passes, and a militia was levied to act with the regulars against the banditti, who were sacking the country towns 'in parties of three and four hundred men, well

found in arms.' Eventually it was found necessary to direct the Collectors of several neighbouring districts to unite their forces; a battle was fought, and the marauders were driven back.

In June 1789 Ilāmbazar, the chief manufacturing town of Bīrbhūm, was sacked in open daylight. Next month Mr. Keating reported to Government that the marauders having crossed the Ajai "in a large party armed with *tulwars* and matchlocks" had established themselves in Bīrbhūm, and that their reduction would simply be a question of military force. The rainy season then intervened, and the robber bands retired to their strongholds. During the interval Mr. Keating elaborated a plan of outposts held by troops along the principal *ghāts* or passes to check their inroads. By November the six most important passes were occupied, a detachment was posted at Bishnupur, and another was stationed at Ilāmbazar to prevent dacoits from crossing the river. The posts, however, were forced, and to all appearance the district was no safer than when Mr. Keating took over charge. The military, harassed by night marches, and scattered about in small bands, were unable to cope with the dacoits or even to protect the principal towns. On the 25th November 1789 the Commanding Officer reported that only four men remained to guard the Government offices at Surī; and a few weeks later he declared himself unable to furnish an escort sufficient to ensure the safety of a treasure party through the district. On the 5th June 1790, Rājnagar fell into the hands of the banditti, and an express was sent to summon the detachments from Bishnupur by forced marches to the rescue of Bīrbhūm. After this, the outposts, strengthened by reinforcements, were maintained intact; and the banditti, unable to find an entrance, made a detour southwards, and massed themselves on the south of the Ajai. There the inhabitants joined heartily with the Government against the common enemy, and the destruction of the robber hordes of Bīrbhūm was accomplished.

The state of desolation and misery to which the country was reduced by these years of tumult, may be inferred from the following extract from a letter written by Mr. Keating in June 1792. 'Bīrbhūm,' he wrote, 'is surrounded on the south-west and west by the great western jungle, which has long protected from the vigilance of justice numerous gangs of dacoits who there take refuge and commit their depredations on the neighbouring defenceless cultivators. Towns once populous are now deserted; the manufactures are decayed; and where commerce flourished, only a few poor and wretched hovels are seen. These pernicious effects are visible along the whole course of the

Ajai, particularly in the decay of Ilāmbazar, and the almost complete desertion of the once large trading town of Lakrakunda. When these places on the frontier became, from their poverty, no longer an object to the dacoits, their depredations were extended into the heart of the district; and towns have been plundered and people murdered within two *kos* (*i.e.*, four miles) of the Collector's house by banditti amounting to upwards of three thousand men.'

The desolation of the district was accentuated by the ravages of wild beasts. The early records show that the clearings of the iron-smelters in the forest were deserted; the charcoal-burners driven from their occupation by wild beasts; many factories abandoned; the cattle trade at a standstill; and the halting places, where herds used to rest and graze on their way to the plains, written down as waste. The records also frequently speak of the mail bags being carried off by wild beasts, and after fruitless injunctions to the land-holders to clear the forests, Lord Cornwallis was at length compelled to sanction a public grant to keep open a new military road that passed through Bīrbhūm. The ravages of wild elephants were on a larger scale, and their extermination formed one of the most important duties of the Collector. In 1790 it was reported that in two *parganas* 56 villages 'had all been destroyed and gone to jungle, caused by the depredations of the wild elephants' and an official return stated that forty market towns had been deserted from the same cause. The Rājā of Bīrbhūm petitioned the Company to use its influence with the Nawāb of Bengal to procure the loan of the Viceregal stud of tame elephants in order to catch the wild ones. This assistance not being obtained, the Rājā formally applied for a reduction of revenue, in consequence of the district being depopulated by wild elephants. The claim was said to be just by the Collector, who reported in 1791 :—" I had ocular proof on my journey to Deoghar, marks of their ravages remaining. The poor timid native ties his cot in a tree, to which he retires when the elephants approach and silently views the destruction of his cottage and all the profits of his labour. I saw some of these retreats in my journey, and had the cause of them explained. In Belpatta very few inhabitants remained, and the zamīndār's fears for the neighbouring *parganas* will certainly be realized in the course of a few years, if some method is not fallen on to extirpate those destructive animals."

The Commercial Resident. In spite of the raids of *dacoits* and the lapse of cultivation into jungle, European commercial enterprise was busy in the district. The East India Company had a monopoly of the silk

industry, and carried on its trade by means of a Commercial Resident. This trade was on a large scale, the sum spent on the mercantile investment in the district during the latter years of the 18th century varying from 4½ to 6½ lakhs; at times the Collector was unable to meet the heavy drafts by the Resident on the treasury. The weavers worked upon a system of advances, every head of a family in a Company's village having an account at the factory, which he attended once a year for the purpose of seeing his account made up, and the value of the goods which he had delivered from time to time set off against the sums he had received. The balance was then struck, a new advance generally given, and the account re-opened for the ensuing year. The interests of the weavers were zealously guarded by the Resident, who brought to the notice of the Collector or the Government any matter he considered prejudicial to the Company's trade. In 1789, for instance, a military guard was sent to Ilāmbazar to protect the weavers from dacoits, and shortly afterwards the Governor-General, on the representation of the Resident, ordered a zamīndār, in whose estate there had been a robbery of goods belonging to the Company, to produce either the robbers or the goods; otherwise, a portion of his lands would be sold and the price of the stolen property realized from the proceeds.

The first Commercial Resident of Bīrbhūm was Mr. John Cheap, who came to India as a member of the Bengal Civil Service in 1782 and held the post of Resident for 41 years. He lived chiefly at Surul, 20 miles from Surī, where his residence consisted of a pile of buildings surrounded by artificial tanks and spacious gardens, encircled by a strong wall, which gave the place a look of a fortress rather than of a private dwelling. Such, in fact, it was, for sepoys were posted at Surul to guard the factory. Here Mr. Cheap held an unofficial court, the villagers referring their disputes to his arbitration. "Little parties arrived every morning—one bearing a wild beast, and expecting the reward; another guarding a captured dacoit; a third to request protection against a threatened attack on their village; a fourth to procure the adjustment of some dispute about their water-courses or land-marks. In such matters the law gave Mr. Cheap no power; but in the absence of efficient courts, public opinion had accorded jurisdiction to any influential person who chose to assume it, and the Commercial Resident's decision was speedy, inexpensive and usually just."

Besides being the medium for investing the Company's money, Mr. Cheap was a great merchant and manufacturer on his own account. He introduced the cultivation of indigo

into the district, improved the manufacture of sugar by means of apparatus brought out from Europe, and established a mercantile house, which flourished till about 40 years ago and whose brand till then bore his initials. To Mr. Cheap also the district was indebted for the only good roads it possessed at the beginning of the 19th century, viz., the roads passing from Surī, through Surul, to Burdwān; from Surul to Ganutiā; and from Surul to Kātwā. He died at Ganutiā in 1828 at the age of 62, and was buried in the old factory grounds at that place. He was known as "Cheap the Magnificent" and has been immortalized by Sir William Hunter in the *Annals of Rural Bengal.* "The whole industrial classes were in his pay, and in his person Government appeared in its most benign aspect. A long unpaid retinue followed him from one factory to another, and as the procession defiled throughout the hamlets, mothers held aloft their children to catch a sight of his palanquin, while the elders bowed low before the providence from whom they derived their daily bread. Happy was the infant on whom his shadow fell."

The Commercial Agent. Besides the Commercial Resident, who was a salaried officer of the Company, there was a Commercial Agent, who worked with his own capital, supplying silk to the Company at fixed rates. The first Agent was a Frenchman named Frushard, who had been sent out by the Court of Directors in 1782 to be Superintendent of the Company's Silk Works. In consequence of a reduction in the investment, his services were dispensed with, and he was permitted to erect a silk filature on his own account at Ganutiā on the river Mor. He purchased the buildings there in 1785 from a Mr. Edward Hay for Rs. 20,000, being allowed by Government to hold his lands as a *paikāsht raiyat*, and two years later was taken into the Company's employ as Commercial Agent.* Frushard from the very first had a hard struggle to maintain his position. Six months after his purchase of the lease and buildings there was a flood, which in one day swept away a number of huts which had cost him Rs. 15,000 to erect and put him to a further expense in constructing embankments. He found the Company's local officers gave him little or no help, but threw obstructions in his way as a private merchant or "adventurer." The natives charged him the highest prices for everything, and the Company allowed him the smallest.

A sanguine, irascible man, a novice in dealing with the agricultural classes, but full of energy, and firmly believing that

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* E. G. Drake-Brockman. *Notes on the Early Administration of the District of Birbhūm.*

a fortune was to be made in a few years, Frushard entered into engagements without calculating the cost and lived a laborious life with small profit. In the first place he paid a great deal too much for his land. Jungle lands, such as those he held, then let for 12 annas an acre, but the Rājā of Bīrbhūm, having a monopoly of almost the whole land in the district, managed to obtain Rs. 3-4 an acre from him. Frushard soon fell into arrears, and the Rājā complained to the Collector, putting forward Frushard's non-payment of his rent as an excuse for his own arrears of land revenue. The Collector found himself powerless to touch the defaulting Frushard. He could not distrain the factory lands or take out execution against its stock-in-trade, for such a step would interfere with the regular supply of the silk investment. He feared to take any step that would bring down on his own head the wrath of the Board of Trade, and poured forth his complaints to the Board of Revenue. He stated that, while the factory property was thus protected from attachment, the adventurer secured his person from arrest by living beyond his jurisdiction, and that, in short, he had no means of reaching 'that *paikāsht raiyat*' Mr. Frushard. Nor was the latter less clamorous. His case even reached the Court of Directors, and Lord Cornwallis wrote of him as deserving special indulgence. The burden of all his petitions was that Government should use its influence with the Rājā to procure a remission of rent. At length, in 1790, he declared himself wearied out, and made a final appeal for relief. He had taken the land, he said, at an exorbitant rent; to this rent he had added the interest on the capital expended in reclaiming the land from jungle; he had suffered heavy losses from floods; his filature had been at work during four years, but it had not begun to pay. In the past year (1789) he had indeed cleared the paltry sum of Rs. 2,000 as a return for all his capital, but during the current year (1790) he would not be able to make both ends meet. 'In a word, although for these five years forbearing from any place of public resort, and living almost in retirement, here I am, after a ten years' absence from home, with no hope to return, and with barely the means to live.'

At length, in 1791, Lord Cornwallis passed orders that all his past arrears should be remitted; that for the future his rent should be reduced by nearly one-half; and that the Collector should deduct whatever these sums came to from the land revenue payable by the Rājā. Mr. Frushard, being thus relieved from the exorbitant rent he had hastily agreed to, became a permanent resident in Bīrbhūm, and soon a very important one. A

pushing European with Rs. 1,50,000 a year to spend on behalf of the Company, and as much more as his credit could supply on his own account, and connected in a certain degree with the Government, he acquired great influence among the jungle villages. In this uncared-for territory his presence made itself felt in spite of official discouragement. He became their Magistrate and Judge, arrested robbers, freed many a village from tigers, spread a ring of cultivation and prosperity round the factory, and founded little tributary filatures.

The researches of Mr. E. G. Drake-Brockman have thrown further light on the history of Mr. Frushard and his venture. He shows, that, in 1791, at the request of Government, the Rājā gave him a lease for 12 years of 2,500 *bighās* round his works at a rental of Rs. 1,500 a year. In 1800 the rental was increased to Rs. 3,411 a year, in spite of his objections that the rent received by him after many years only amounted to Rs. 2,163, while his works had cost Rs. 60,000 and had been in the Company's use without rent ever being paid by it. His commission amounted to Rs. 12,000 a year, which, after paying the interest on his capital, only left him Rs. 3,000 or Rs. 4,000. Mr. Frushard died in 1807, and the factory was then taken over by Mr. Cheap at a rent of Rs. 3,415 from Government, which had purchased the estate at Calcutta for Rs. 15,800 at a sale held for arrears of revenue. On the death of Mr. Cheap in 1828 the estate was put in charge of Mr. Shakespear, who acted as Commercial Resident until 1835, when the manufacture of silk by Government ceased.

The French. The French also engaged in trade in Bīrbhūm at an early period. A report submitted in 1784 by Mr. Smith, Resident at Sonāmukhī (in the Bānkurā district), to the Comptroller of Aurungs, states as follows :—"Prior to the year 1768, the French provided only through Gomastahs. In that year Mon. Le Seigneur came into Beerbhoom and obtained a few bigahs of ground from a Ghussein, who resides at Sapour, named Aunund Chund. On this spot he built a house, and termed it a factory ; where he hoisted the French colours, established guards, and made advances for Gurrahs through .Dololls to the amount of Rs. 1,25,000 annually, entertaining at the same time Gomastahs, who placed Mohussils on the weavers, etc., and even punished them, exercising an authority equal to that invested in the Company's agents, who were only superior in having at that time the support of the revenue. Some time about the year 1774 he quitted the Aurung and never returned again. He was the only French gentleman that ever resided in the Aurung, and

from the period of his departure no advances have been made under sanction of the French name".* In 1777, however, we find that there was a French factory at Supur in charge of Messrs. Chaubon and Arrear. In that year they were ordered by Mr. Sherburne not to hoist the French flag, and Mr. Arbuthnot, the Assistant Collector, was deputed to Supur to enforce the taking down of the flag. Later, in 1793, when notice of war between England and France had been received, the Magistrate took "paroles of honour" from the two Frenchmen "not to serve against Britain or undertake any fresh speculation." The Magistrate also took possession of "one mutilated house in Supur, which was French property." This French factory was afterwards put under Mr. Cheap on behalf of the authorities.

Private merchants.

Other Europeans were also endeavouring to exploit the resources of the district. Some took leases of the right to work iron, and as early as 1787 we read of a Mr. Farquhar holding the Lohā Mahāl at a lease of Rs. 765 a year. A fuller account of this industry will be found in Chapter VIII. Four more Europeans had undertaken the manufacture of indigo, and a fifth of sugar. Mr. Erskine had come to Bīrbhūm in 1787 with "a free merchant's covenant" and started the manufacture of indigo at Ilāmbazar, while Mr. Peterson, who had been sent from England in 1792 to extend the cultivation of sugar, had found suitable lands for the purpose in Bīrbhūm.†

THE SANTAL REBELLION.

The most interesting event in the subsequent history of Bīrbhūm is the Santāl rebellion of 1855, which broke out in the Santāl Parganas and spread to this district. In the beginning of July 1855 the Santāls moved across the border and sacked Palsā in the north of the district, but fell back on the advance of a force of 400 men of the 7th Native Infantry, which advanced from Berhampore, and next day defeated them at Maheshpur. By the 20th July Mrityunjaypur and Nārāyanpur to the north-west of Rāmpur Hāt had been sacked, and by the 23rd Gānpur and other villages had been destroyed. Further south the rebels overran the country from the Grand Trunk Road in Burdwān, a few miles across the south-western boundary, to Sainthiā in the heart of the district. The country was panic-stricken, and Surī at one time was threatened with an attack. Major Vincent Jarvis, who was ordered up with his regiment from Barrackpore, was, on his arrival at Burdwān, ordered by the Commissioner to push on

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* *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. III, No. 2, p. 366.

† E. G. Drake-Brockman, *Notes on the Early Administration of Birbhūm.*

direct for Surī, as it was in instant danger of attack. "We marched," he wrote, "for two days and a night, the rain pouring the whole way, and my men without any regular food. As we came near to Surī, we found panic in every village, The Hindus fairly lined the road, welcoming us with tears in their eyes, and pressing sweetmeats and parched rice upon my exhausted sepoys. At Surī we found things, if possible, worse. One officer kept his horse saddled day and night, the jail seemed to have been hastily fortified, and the bulk of the coin from the treasury was said, I know not with what truth, to be hid in a well." On the western border parties of the 2nd, 37th and 56th regiments were engaged at various places with the rebels, whom they defeated with severe loss; but the small detachments posted at distant places in a wide range of territory were unequal to the task set them. The rebels obtained possession of Nagar and Afzalpur, but after some further fighting were compelled to evacuate them and retire across the border to Kumrābād.

Towards the end of July General Lloyd was placed in command of the force employed against the Santāls, and shortly afterwards Colonel Bird was appointed, with the rank of a Brigadier, to the special command of the troops in Bīrbhūm and Bānkurā. All the troops available were hurried up, and by the 17th August quiet was for a time restored to this part of the country. "The villagers," wrote the Magistrate of Bīrbhūm on the 24th of August, "have returned to their homes, and the husbandmen are engaged in the cultivation of their land as usual. The Santāls are nowhere to be found, having retreated to a place some thirty miles off in another district." In this month a proclamation was issued promising that all rebels who laid down their arms would be pardoned, except the leaders and those proved to have committed murder; but this offer was regarded as a confession of weakness and the flame of rebellion again blazed up. By the end of September the Magistrate of Bīrbhūm reported that the whole country from four miles west of Nagar up to Deoghar was in their hands; the *dāks* were stopped, the villagers had fled from their homes. One large body of Santāls was encamped to the number of 5,000 to 7,000 at Tilabuni, six miles west of Surī, where they had dug tanks, strengthened their position by earthworks, and made preparations for celebrating the Durgā Pūjā. They were, it was reported, only waiting for another body of about 3,000 Santāls to join them before advancing to attack Surī, and had given notice of their intention in a characteristic way. "They sent us in what is called in their language a *dhārā* or missive—viz., the twig of a *sāl* tree with three

leaves on it, each leaf signifying a day that is to elapse before their arrival—a few days ago, which was brought by one of the Deoghar *dāk* runners, whom they seized and sent back for the purpose."

At length in November 1855 martial law was proclaimed, and a cordon of outposts, in some instances numbering twelve to fourteen thousand men, pushed back the Santāls from the open country. In six weeks nothing remained but to sweep the jungle clear of stragglers, and before the end of the cold weather (1855-56) the rebels had tendered their submission.*

FORMATION OF THE DISTRICT.

After the cession of the Dīwāni to the East India Company in 1765, Bīrbhūm was administered from Murshidābād until 1787. In that year in consequence of the unsettled state of the country, which required a separate administration, it was constituted a district with Bishnupur (*i.e.*, the eastern portion of Bānkurā), and this arrangement continued till 1793, when Bishnupur was transferred to the Burdwān Collectorate. In 1809 the Collectorship of Bīrbhūm was abolished, and the district was again administered from Murshidābād, an Assistant Collector remaining in charge at Surī. In 1820, Bīrbhūm was reconstituted a separate district and restored to its former area, with the exception of a few estates which were transferred to the Jungle Mahāls. After the Santāl rebellion, the upland tracts to the west, which had been a rallying point of the rebels, were transferred to the newly constituted district of the Santāl Parganas, and in this way four *parganas* and a part of a fifth were detached from Bīrbhūm, viz., Sarath Deoghar, Pabbia, Kundahit Karaya, Muhammadābād and part of Darin Mauleswar. In 1872 the district consisted of the following thanās, viz., (1) Surī, (2) Rājnagar (now an outpost of Surī), (3) Dubrājpur, (4) Kasbā (now Bolpur), (5) Sākulipur, (6) Lābpur, (7) Barwan, and (8) Mayūreswar with a total area of 1,344 square miles. In 1879 Barwan with an area of 108 square miles was transferred to Murshidābād, while the thānas of Rāmpur Hāt and Nalhāti (including the present thāna of Murarai) were transferred from the Lālganj subdivision of that district to Bīrbhūm.

RECORDS OF BIRBHUM.

In conclusion, reference may be made to the almost fortuitous manner in which the records of early British rule in Bīrbhūm have been preserved and discovered. The first discovery was made in 1864 by Sir W. W. Hunter, who described it as follows:—"Four years ago, in taking over charge of the District

*This account of the rebellion has been compiled from the *Annals of Rural Bengal* and an article *The Sontal Rebellion* published in the Calcutta Review, Vol. XXVI, 1856.

Treasury, I was struck with the appearance of an ancient press, which, from the state of its padlocks, seemed not to have been opened for many years, and with whose contents none of the native officials was acquainted. On being broken open it was found to contain the early records of the district from within a year of the time that it passed directly under British rule. The volumes presented every appearance of age and decay; their yellow stained margins were deeply eaten into by insects, their outer pages crumbled to pieces under the most tender handling, and of some the sole palpable remains were chips of paper mingled with the granular dust that white-ants leave behind." The noble use made of 'these neglected heaps' is apparent in the *Annals of Rural Bengal.* The second discovery is described as follows in the *Englishman* of 5th January 1872. "A curious discovery of neglected and forgotten records has lately been made by the Commissioner of the Burdwān Division; and, singularly enough, the treasure has been unearthed in a Collectorate the records of which had already been searched by Dr. Hunter. While inspecting the Collector's office, Mr. Buckland found a number of old English manuscript books lying in an open rack in the clerk's room, where they had been exposed for an unknown period to the ravages of time and white-ants, and undisturbed by any previous explorer, having by some accident been left out of the treasury almirahs. Among these, the most neglected, have been found what are probably the oldest records of the Bīrbhūm district; for Mr. Keating is mentioned in the "Rural Annals" as the first Collector of that district whose records survived, and here we have the correspondence of Messrs. Foley and Sherburne, the former of whom was Collector in November 1786, two years before Mr. Keating, and the latter in April 1787. Indeed, the correspondence contains a complete account of the eighteen months' administration of the latter officer, and furnishes a clue to the cause of his removal and subsequent trial. The letters of Mr. Foley's time are chiefly between that officer and the Board of Revenue. One of them is remarkable as presenting an early example of recourse to the sale of land for arrears of revenue, and showing that the step was most reluctantly taken. In 1787 wild elephants were so numerous in Bīrbhūm, that the whole district was in danger of being overrun by them, and *shikāris* were sent for from Sylhet and Chittagong to aid in their capture."

CHAPTER III.

THE PEOPLE.

GROWTH OF POPULATION.

THE population of the district, as enumerated at each census, is shown in the marginal table, from which it will be apparent that the district was decadent until 1891, and that in 29 years the number of its inhabitants has only increased by 51,000.

1872 ...	... 851,235
1881 ...	... 792,031
1891 ...	... 798,254
1901 ...	... 902,280

The decline between 1872 and 1891 was due mainly to the ravages of fever, and especially of the epidemic known as Burdwān fever, which raged between 1872 and 1881, the result being that the population fell off by nearly 60,000. It continued its ravages during the earlier years of the next decade, specially in the south of the district; and although there was an improvement during the following years, the census of 1891 showed a further decrease of nearly 4 per cent. in the population of the head-quarters subdivision. This decrease was due to the high mortality in the Bolpur and Sākulipur thānas, which adjoin the Ausgrām thāna of Burdwān, where the fever was still prevalent in 1891. The loss in the south of the district was, however, counterbalanced by an increase of 10 per cent. in the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision; and in the district as a whole there was a small increase, amounting to barely one-tenth of the loss registered ten years earlier. After 1891 there was a marked improvement in the health of the people and in their material condition. The fever epidemic disappeared; and although cholera often broke out, especially in the south-eastern thānas, there were no serious epidemics. The result was that during the decade ending in 1901 the district added 13 per cent. to its population. The increase was most marked in the south of the district, where it represented a recovery from the unhealthiness of the previous decade, and in the extreme north, where there was a considerable influx of Santāls.

CENSUS OF 1901.

The results of the census of 1901 are described as follows in the Bengal Census Report: "The result of the prosperous condition of the district and of its comparative freedom from disease is an increase of 104,240 persons or 13 per cent. The population now exceeds by about 6 per cent. that recorded at the

first census, 29 years previously. There has been some immigration of Santāls for cultivation and of up-country men in connection with the railway, but the total number of the foreign settlers is only 14,000 greater than it was in 1891. This, moreover, is to a large extent counterbalanced by a greater amount of emigration, and it is thus clear that the increase is due mainly to the natural growth of the population. Excluding Murarai in the extreme north of the district, where the immigration of Santāls has been greatest, the improvement is most marked in the south of the district, where it represents a recovery from the losses recorded at the last census. The continued advance of the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision is attributed partly to its fertile soil and partly to the fact that it is tapped by the railway.

The following table gives the salient statistics of the census of 1901:—

SUBDIVISION.	Area in square miles.	NUMBER OF		Population.	Population per square mile.	Percentage of variation in population between 1891 and 1901.
		Towns.	Villages.			
Suri ...	1,107	1	1,981	535,928	484	14·0
Rāmpur Hāt	645	...	1,336	366,352	568	11·7
District Total	1,752	1	3,317	902,280	515	13·0

Density.

With an average of 515 persons to the square mile, Bīrbhūm is more sparsely inhabited than any district in the Burdwān Division except Bānkurā; but the density of population rises in the north to 601 persons per square mile in the Nalhāti thāna and to 629 in the Murarai thāna. Here the soil is alluvial and the proportion of cultivable land is greatest, besides which these thānas are well provided with means of communication. The most thinly inhabited thāna is Bolpur to the south, which has suffered from a number of adverse circumstances. It was formerly populous, but it has suffered much from fever, and the lac and indigo factories which formerly flourished along the river Ajai have declined. This thāna now supports only 451 persons to the square mile, and the next most sparsely inhabited thāna is Surī (453 per square mile), which is an undulating tract with a sterile soil. Generally speaking, the density of population decreases towards the west, where the ground is rolling and large tracts are unfit for cultivation, and increases towards the east where the land is level and more suitable for cultivation.

The statistics of migration show that 6·7 per cent. of the population as enumerated in 1901 were born elsewhere, while 5·2 per cent. were resident in other districts at the time of the census. The volume of immigration thus slightly exceeds that of emigration. The immigrants consist mostly of Santāls, who come to the district in search of land for cultivation or of employment as agricultural labourers. Other immigrants come from Bihār and the United Provinces and settle down as labourers, shop-keepers, zamīndārs' peons, etc. Among the emigrants a considerable number go to Assam to work on the tea gardens, but, apart from this, most of the emigration is of a temporary character. Migration.

The only place returned as a town at the census of 1901 is Surī, the district head-quarters, which has a population of 8,692 persons. The only other places with more than 5,000 inhabitants are Margrām (6,518) and Dubrājpur with Islāmpur (6,715). Generally speaking, the population is entirely rural, even the three places mentioned above being little more than populous villages. Towns and villages.

Sixty-nine per cent. of the population are supported by agriculture, 11·7 per cent. by industries, 1·5 per cent. by the professions, and 0·4 per cent. by commerce. Of the agricultural population, 28 per cent. are actual workers, and these include 1,600 rent-receivers, 137,000 rent-payers and 36,000 field-labourers. Of the industrial classes 60 per cent. are workers, among whom there are 12,000 fishermen and fish-dealers, 18,000 rice-pounders and 5,000 cotton-weavers. Among those supported by other occupations are 48,000 general labourers. Occupations.

The predominant language in the district is the dialect of Bengali classified by Dr. Grierson as Western Bengali, which principally differs from Standard Bengali in having a broader pronunciation. The number of persons using it in Bīrbhūm is reported to be 575,500. Santāli is spoken by the Santāls settled in the district, the number of persons returned as speaking it in 1901 being 47,455. The Korā language is spoken by the Korās, who state that they came from Singhbhūm and are now found on the borders of the Santāl Parganas. This dialect belongs to the Mundā family, and, as spoken by them, is almost pure Mundāri. LANGUAGE.

Hindus form the great majority of the inhabitants of Bīrbhūm, having a strength of 657,684 in 1901, while Muhammadans numbered 201,645, Animists 42,019, Christians 819 and members of other religions 113. RELIGIONS.

The oldest Christian Mission at work in Bīrbhūm is the Baptist Mission, of which a branch was established here nearly Christians.

a century ago by the Serampore Mission. One of the earliest missionaries was Mr. James Williamson, who arrived in India in 1821 as a surgeon on board the *Heroine*. He was sent by Doctors Carey and Marshman from Serampore to Bīrbhūm, where he acted as Assistant Surgeon at the Surī Jail in addition to his other duties. The Baptist Mission has its head-quarters at Surī, and maintains a girls' school there, which was opened 40 years ago, besides several village schools. The only other mission at work in the district is the Methodist Episcopal Mission, which started work at Bolpur a few years ago. Of the total number (819) of Christians, 709 are natives.

Muhammadans. The great majority of the Muhammadans are Sheikhs, who number 182,545 or nine-tenths of the whole community. Pathāns have 11,981 representatives, Saiyids 3,867 and Jolāhās 1,974.

Hinduism. Vaishnavism appears to have been popular in the district as early as the close of the 12th century A.D., when Jayadeva composed the great Vaishnavete lyric known as *Gita Govinda*. Jayadeva was born at Kenduli, and to this day the Vaishnavas hold a fair every year at that place in his memory. At this fair 50,000 to 60,000 persons assemble round his tomb, and the Vaishnavas still sing of the love of Krishna and Rādhikā, which he immortalized in the *Gita Govinda*. Another Vaishnava poet, who was a native of this district, was Chandī Dās, the earliest vernacular poet of Bengal, who flourished in the 14th century. He was a native of Nannur, a village about 24 miles to the east of Surī, and was by birth a Sākta, *i.e.*, a worshipper of Chandī, Durgā or Saktī, but was converted to Vaishnavism. Another great Vaishnava of Bīrbhūm was Nityānanda, one of the chief disciples of Chaitanya, who was born at Garbhabās near Bīrchandrapur.

A considerable proportion of the Hindus of the district are members of low castes, such as Bāgdis, Bauris, Hāris, Doms, Māls and Muchis, aboriginals who gradually lost their distinct tribal character and became absorbed in Hinduism. Among these low classes traces of animistic beliefs are still very noticeable, such as the worship of Manasā and Dharmarāj.

Dharmarāj. Dharmarāj, or as he is usually called in this district, Dharma Thākur, is worshipped by the villagers as one of their special village gods (Grām Devatā), and there is a Dharma Thākur for nearly every village. Those of Suganpur, Sija Kudang, Malbera, Bela and Sarbānandpur are looked on with special veneration, and their shrines are visited by numbers of persons suffering from rheumatism, for the cure of which such a pilgrimage is a specific. This deity is usually worshipped by a low caste priest,

and, as a rule, he is represented by a shapeless stone daubed with vermilion and placed under a tree, but in a few places he is enshrined in a temple. Hogs, fowls and ducks are sacrificed before him, and offerings are made of rice, flowers, milk and *pachwai*. The worship takes place in the months of Baisākh, Jaistha and Asārh on the day of the full moon, and in some places on the last day of Bhādra.

Manasā is the godling of snakes, whose worship is widespread on account of the number of snakes and the dread of their bite. She is represented either by the *manasā* plant (*Euphorbia Nerifolia* or *Ligularia*) or by a stone rudely carved into the form of a female seated on a snake, or, it may be, by a shapeless block smeared with vermilion. The plant or stone is generally found under a tree, preferably an *aswattha* tree, or housed in a hut, a room, and occasionally a small brick temple. The offerings consist of rice and other articles, but goats are sacrificed on special occasions. She is specially worshipped on the last days of the months of Srāban and Bhādra (August and September), a season when snakes are forced out of their holes by rain and are a very real danger to the bare-footed wayfarer. Manasā.

Manasā is a favourite object of worship among the Gandhabaniks, owing to the legend that their caste-fellow Lakhindara, son of Chānd Saudāgar, was bitten by a snake on his wedding day because he had neglected her worship. They engage parties called Manasā Mangalā to sing her praises in their houses two or three days before a marriage is celebrated. A Bāgdi or Dom priest, called Dharma Pundit, sometimes professes to be inspired by the goddess, and foretells future events and prescribes medicines to those who consult him.

Divination is frequently practised by the low caste priests, especially after the worship of Mangalā and other disease godlings, when epidemics break out. Incense is burnt, and the priest sits holding his head over the fumes. After a time, he throws himself into a frenzy, and, as the fit passes off, the worshippers ask him the cause of the calamity. He then replies, assigning it to some wrongful act or omission on their part which has brought down the wrath of the deity, and stating what sacrifice is necessary in order to appease him. The necessary offerings are at once made. Divination.

Ordeals, called *Bāti-chālā*, *Pāndarpan*, *Chālparā*, *Kālīr Bhar*, *Brahma Daitya Bhar* and *Dharmarāj Bhar*, are resorted to in case of thefts. In the *Bāti-chālā* form one man presses a brass cup with his hand, while another recites *mantras*. The cup or *bāti* is supposed to move towards the place where the stolen property is hidden. Ordeals.

If the *Pāndarpan* ordeal is employed, an unmarried girl holds a betel-leaf smeared with oil in her hand, looks into it, and when questioned by the *ojhā* or wizard pronounces the name of the thief, saying that his image is visible on the oil. If the girl cannot recognize the image, the *ojhā* asks the spirit, whom he has invoked by his *mantra,* to write down the name of the thief on the betel leaf, and this is then read out by the girl. In the *Chālparā* form some *mantras* are read over some rice, and it is alleged that if the thief eats the charmed rice, blood will come out of his mouth. In the *Kālī Bhar*, *Brahma Daitya Bhar* and *Dharmarāj Bhar* forms of ordeal the goddess Kālī, the ghost Brahma Daitya and the god Dharma, respectively, are supposed to speak through the medium of some person. Other tests employed for finding out a wrong-doer are to make a man touch the foot-stool of Kālī or Dharmarāj, some Ganges water, a piece of copper or a *tulsi* leaf, or, in the case of Muhammadans, a mosque or a copy of the Korān. The man is then asked to say whether he committed the theft. The practice of making a man swear before a public assembly or an assembly of castemen is also resorted to for the detection of thieves and wrong-doers.

TRIBES AND CASTES. According to tradition, the district was once inhabited by fierce jungle tribes, black sturdy men, who devoured any flesh they could obtain. Their chief was one Hirambak, who was killed by Bhima, one of the five Pāndava brothers, during their exile. Even as late as the 15th century, the district is described in the *Brahmānda* section of the *Bhavishyat Purāna* as being inhabited by people who were of small stature and black complexion, with immoral propensities and ignorant of religious duties, a few only being Vaishnavas. In course of time the population received an appreciable Aryan admixture, but to this day a large proportion of the population are of aboriginal descent, ranking low in the Hindu hierarchy of castes; and during the last century the immigration of Santāls has largely increased the aboriginal element.

Bāgdi ...	... 88,342
Sadgop ...	... 84,324
Santāl ...	... 47,221
Muchi ...	... 41,282
Dom ...	... 40,666
Brāhman ...	... 39,825
Māl ...	... 38,697
Bauri ...	... 36,235
Hāri ...	... 27,634

The marginal table shows the different castes found to have more than 25,000 representatives at the census of 1901. The following is a brief notice of each of these castes and of a few other castes peculiar to Bīrbhūm :—

Bāgdis. The Bāgdis are a caste of aboriginal descent, who are believed to have been among the earliest inhabitants of the district.

They gradually became Hinduized, but there is little doubt of their being non-Aryan, and to this day they are at the bottom of the social scale. In this district they are chiefly engaged in cultivation, boating, fishing and labour. The most prominent septs or sub-castes in Bīrbhūm are Khetri, Kusmetiā, Tentuliā, Trayodas and Nodā, of which the Tentuliā ranks highest. Intermarriage between members of the different sub-castes is not allowed, but they can smoke and eat cooked rice together.

The Sadgops are believed to be the oldest Hindu settlers in the district. They say that their original name was Gop, and their home was Gopbhūm, the country between Ajai and Dāmodar, the name of which survives in the Gopbhūm *pargana* of Burdwān. This, they say, they held as an independent principality, and from it they migrated to Bīrbhūm. Here the Goālās, who at first formed one caste with them, associated with the aboriginal population, and were therefore not ministered to by good Brāhmans. They themselves, however, were able to preserve the purity of their race, and to distinguish themselves from the Goālās, took the name of Sadgops, *i.e.*, the good or pure Gops. They rank among the Nabasākhs, *i.e.*, the nine clean Sūdras, from whom the higher castes will take water. They are found all over the district, and are generally substantial cultivators. Many of them own landed property, and some have taken to Government service, trade or the professions. Their common title is *Mandal*, meaning literally headman. Sadgops.

The Santāls of Bīrbhūm are a branch of the well known tribe of that name. They appear to have migrated to this country towards the close of the 18th century, being brought in to clear the jungle and drive out the wild beasts with which the district was then infested. The original settlers appear from the manuscripts of Buchanan-Hamilton to have come from Palāmau and Rāmgarh, for, writing of some Santāls whom he met in the Santāl Parganas in the beginning of the 19th century, he said:—"They came last from Bīrbhūm in consequence of the annoyance which they received from its zamīndārs. The original seat of this tribe, as far as I can learn from them, is Palāmau and Rāmgarh." Santāls.

The Santāl villages border on those in the Santāl Parganas, and are situated in the narrow strip of high broken country west of the East Indian Railway, lying between the hills of the Santāl Parganas, which here approach the Bīrbhūm border, on the one side and the alluvial soil of the plains proper on the other. Where these hills recede from the border, as in the south-west

of the Murarai thāna, there are practically no Santāl villages; and there is thus a strip of country where Bengali and Santāli cultivation meet. On the one side there is the Santāl country, on the other there is the Bengali country; and as such, it is debateable land, for there are Bengali villages in it and also areas in which the population is mainly Santāl.

The returns of 1872 show that the number of Santāls in the whole district was then only 6,954; it is now 47,221 according to the census of 1901. This large increase in the population is due to the fact that the Santāls are unusually prolific and very hardy, as well as to the growth of population in the Santāl Parganas pressing the Santāls eastwards. But these figures do not represent the sum of the increase in this area. Many of the Santāls, particularly from the northern portion, have, owing to the greater pressure on the soil or to dispossession by *mahājans* or zamīndārs, either emigrated to the Bārind, a quasi-laterite tract of country in Dinājpur, Rājshāhi and Bogrā, or else to Murshidābād, there to break fresh country, to clear the jungles, and to make new terraces of rice land, for doing which they possess singular aptitude, even in the most unpromising country.

Muchis and Doms. The Muchis are the shoe-makers and leather-dealers of the district, while the Doms are basket-makers, cultivators, labourers and drummers, their wives serving as midwives. The Konais are regarded in Bīrbhūm as a separate caste from Muchis, though in some parts they are regarded as a sub-caste. They are sub-divided into Chāsi Konais, who are labourers and cultivators, and Kurur Konais, who eat buffaloes and work as labourers and drummers.

Brāhmans. The Brāhmans of the district are mostly Rārhi Brāhmans, and, in addition to following their priestly calling, are zamīndārs, tenure-holders, occupancy ryots, pleaders, mukhtārs, money-lenders and Government servants.

Māls. The Māls are engaged in fishing, boating and cultivation, and are believed to be among the oldest inhabitants of the district. It appears probable that they are of the same stock as the Bāgdis, for though they claim to assert their superiority, they interchange the *hukka* with them up to the present date; and it is said that in physical aspects, love of fish and intoxication, and general mode of living, there is no difference between them and the Bāgdis.

Bauris. The Bauris, who are mainly cultivators and field-labourers, are a caste of aboriginal descent, which appears to have migrated to Bīrbhūm from the south. They are among the lowest of all

the castes, being unclean feeders, served neither by Brāhman, Dhobā or Nāpit.

The Hāris are scavengers, sweepers and swine-herds, but some are employed in cultivation. In this district they are divided into four sub-castes:—(1) Bhuinmāli, who are cultivators; (2) Dāi or Phul Hārí, midwives; (3) Kahār Hāri, *pālki*-bearers; and (4) Mehtar Hāri, who alone act as sweepers. The Mehtar Hāris are again sub-divided into three sections called Bengali, Maghaiyā and Bānswāri. Hāris.

The Lets, being a caste peculiar to Bīrbhūm and the adjoining districts, call for special mention. They are often regarded as a sub-caste of the Bāgdis, but they themselves do not admit it; no intermarriage is allowed, and they are mentioned as a distinct caste in the *Brahma Vaivartta Purāna*. The latter, though one of the latest Purānas, contains a good deal of old material, so that the Lets are probably one of the oldest castes of the district. The following account of them is given by Mr. Gait in the *Bengal Census Report of 1901*:—"I have shown Let as a sub-caste of Bāgdi, with which it appears to have been classed at previous censuses, but it is generally regarded as a separate caste in Bīrbhūm and the adjoining districts, where it is chiefly found. It is also mentioned as a separate caste in the *Brahma Vaivartta Purāna*,* where its origin is attributed to the union of a Tiyar husband and a Tailakar wife, and its traditional occupation is said to be dacoity. The head-quarters of the community are at Songora Bazar in Bīrbhūm. There are two exogamous divisions, Kāshyap and Alādasi, but no sub-castes. They trace their origin to one Asipākar, but cannot say who he was. By occupation the Lets are day-labourers; they also fish with nets (bamboo fishing traps are taboo), catch tortoises and knit nets. Many are village watchmen; a few are cultivators. They rank with Māls and Bāgdis, and all three will smoke from the same *hukkā*, though they will not eat together. The Lets are Hindus, and employ degraded Brāhmans for religious and ceremonial purposes. They pay special reverence to Manasā, and also to Dharmarāj, who is given offerings of rice-beer on the full moon nights of Baisākh and Jaistha. They usually burn their dead, but bury them on the bank of a river when fuel cannot be had; in such cases the grave is six feet deep, and the corpse is laid on its back. They perform the *srādh* ceremony after ten days, and propitiate the spirits of departed ancestors at Lets.

* *Brahmakhanda*, Cap. X, verse 101. The mention of Let in this ancient work shows that the name must formerly have been applied to a much larger community than that which is known by it at the present time.

marriage. Infant marriage is practised. Smearing the bride's forehead with vermilion constitutes the essential part of the marriage ceremony. Widows are allowed to marry again by the *sagāi* rite; the second husband is usually a widower, when the iron bangle of his previous wife is placed on the widow's arm. Her rights and privileges are precisely the same as those of a virgin wife. Divorce is permitted for infidelity, barrenness, incompatibility of temper, or failure to maintain. The Lets eat goat's flesh, fish—both scaly and scaleless—and ducks, but abstain from the flesh of pigs, cattle, fowls, etc. They will admit outsiders of a decidedly superior caste, *e.g.*, members of the Nabasākha group, but not Bāgdis, Kalus, Dhobās and the like. An outcasted Kumhār and a Puro are reported to have been recently received into the Let caste in Bīrbhūm."

Bhollas. The Bhollas are a small community found only in the Lābpur and Mayūreswar thānas of this district and the Panchthupi and Barwan thānas of Murshidābād. They are apparently a recent offshoot from the Bāgdi caste, and there is no doubt that the two communities are very closely allied. They eat *pakki* and drink together, smoke from the same *hukkā*, and are served by the same class of degraded Brāhmans, who also work for the Māl and Let. They do not intermarry, however, and the Bhollas claim superiority over the Bāgdis on the ground that they do not, like the latter, catch and sell fish or carry the *pālki*, and that divorce is subject to greater restrictions. It appears, however, that fishing is still the occupation of the poorer members of the community. The others are mostly non-occupancy ryots and day-labourers. Many of them are dacoits, thieves, and clubmen or *lāthiāls*; a few work as carpenters, potters and village watchmen.*

Jadupetiās. The Jadupetiās are a community found only in this district and in Mānbhūm and the Santāl Parganas, who occupy a place midway between Hinduism and Muhammadanism. They say they are the descendants of a Muhammadan *fakīr* by a low caste Hindu woman. They believe in Allah, but also worship Kālī, Manasā, Devī and other deities of the Hindu pantheon. Hindu priests sometimes officiate when they offer sacrifices to Kālī. They practise circumcision and bury their dead. On the other hand, many of them kill animals as the Hindus do, by severing the head from the body, and shave off their beards. Many again bear Hindu names, and their married women mark the parting of their hair with vermilion. Some also abstain from beef. They have a Kāzī who officiates at their marriages, but not necessarily

* *Bengal Census Report of 1901*, p. 403.

at their burial services. By profession they are brass-workers and make trinkets, gongs, weights, etc., of that metal. Some again are mendicants; they draw pictures of persons recently dead and exhibit them to the bereaved relatives who give them presents.*

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS.

At Surī there is a Muhammadan association known as the Anjumān Mazukare Islāmia, the object of which is the social and educational advancement of the Muhammadan community. At Bhubandāngā near Bolpur there is a Brāhmo Samāj building, known as the Sāntiniketan, which is associated with the great Brāhmo leader, Debendra Nath Tagore; in connection with this a Brāhmo School is maintained. In the village of Fatehpur in the Rāmpur Hāt sub-division there is a semi-literary society called the Bāndhab Samiti, the members of which have formed a co-operative credit society. There are also some Hari Sabhās and Brāhmo Samājes dealing with religious matters, among which the Brāhmo Samāj of Surī and Nalhāti may be mentioned.

VILLAGE OFFICIALS.

It is not easy to draw the line between village officials properly so-called, zamīndāri servants, village professional men and village artisans. Formerly persons falling under all these categories were looked upon as servants of the whole village, and as such were paid by *chākrān* (or service) grants of land, and this is still the case to a certain extent. In most of these cases, the *chākrān* grants are of the nature of a general retainer of the services of the grantee for the village; and specific work for an individual villager is paid for separately.

Mandal.

Some traces of the old indigenous village system are still found in the recognition of the village headman or Mandal. Originally he was responsible for the village rent, and it was his duty to assist in the collection of revenue and help the zamīndār in measuring and ascertaining the boundaries of the lands held by each ryot. He was generally responsible for the peace of the village and for bringing to justice all kinds of malefactors, and he was recognized as arbitrator of village disputes and as the constitutional referee in all matters affecting the village community. There was no salary attached to the post, but the Mandal was sometimes allowed to hold his lands at a slightly lower rate of rent than the other ryots. His office in course of time became hereditary, and it is so still; but his position is now of much less importance than it originally was. He is still looked to by the zamīndār to assist in the realization of rent; but, except in small agricultural villages, he no longer possesses the influence he did

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* *Bengal Census Report of 1901*, pp. 413-14.

among his fellow villagers. He commands respect, however, in the village, and receives gratuities at the time of marriages. On *punya* day, *i.e.*, the first rent-day of the year, he has the privilege of paying rent first, and gets some sweetmeats, a garland of flowers, and a sandal mark on the forehead. No ryot is allowed to pay before the Mandal does, and no appointment connected with the village is obtainable without his consent.

Mānjhi. The *mānjhi* is the headman in Santāl villages, who presides at village meetings, decides petty disputes, and attends marriages and religious ceremonies.

Kayāl. In almost every village there is a *kayāl* or weighman, who pays Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 to the zamīndār for the right to weigh grain in it. He is remunerated by receiving from each vendor one *anjali* of rice for each maund that he weighs, *i.e.*, the quantity contained in both hands, or a little less than one *kutcha* seer.

Other village servants. The *simānādār* is a watcher of the village boundaries, who is supposed to bring to notice any encroachments on them. The *āgalda* is the field-watcher, who gets a portion of the paddy crop which he has watched as his salary. The *purohit* performs religious ceremonies for the villagers, and the *bāgāl* is a cowherd appointed by them to look after their herds. Other village servants are the blacksmith, washerman, barber and potter, who, in addition to their own special work, are bound to assist in certain ceremonies and are remunerated by small grants of *chākrān* lands. The Kāmār or blacksmith, for instance, sacrifices goats, the Kumhār or potter supplies vessels at the village festivals, the barber attends at *pūjās*, the Mālis supply garlands of flowers for offerings to the village idols.

Landlord's servants. The landlord's servants, who also pay an important part in village life, are as follows: The *Nāib* is the rent collector of an estate, who looks after the *gumāshtas*, checks their accounts, and generally supervises the management of the estate. The *gumāshtā* is the rent-collector of one or more villages, and is the most important personality in village life. Sometimes there are two *gumāshtas* for a village or group of villages, viz., the *mā-gumāshta* who collects rents, and the *faujdāri gumāshta* who attends to litigation connected with his master's land and tenants. Other servants of the zamīndār are the *rausgir* or *āmin's* chain-man, the *halshana* or *paik*, *i.e.*, a peon who assists the *gumāshta* in collecting rents, and the *astaprahari* who serves as watchman at the zamīndāri *kachahri* and also assists the *gumāshta*.

FOOD. The ordinary food of the people consists principally of rice, pulses (*dāl*), fish, milk and vegetables. The food and the time for taking it vary according to circumstances, but the general

practice is to take two meals, one in the day at about 10 or 11 A.M., and the other at night at about 8 or 9 P.M. The meals consist of the articles mentioned above, except that some persons take bread or *luchi*, *i.e.*, bread fried in *ghī*, at night. As a rule, also, a light repast, usually consisting of sweetmeats, is taken in the morning and in the evening.

DWELLINGS. The houses fall under three main heads, viz., *pākā* or houses made of brick or masonry, *kānchā* or houses thatched with straw, and *khaprā* or houses with tiled roofs. The *pākā* houses again are generally of three kinds, viz., those roofed with beams and rafters made of wood, those in which the roof is supported by girders, and those in which it rests on arches; there are, however, very few of the latter two classes. The walls of these houses are either constructed of bricks made with *surki* and lime or of bricks made of mud. The thatched houses may be divided into three classes according to their thatching, viz., *ekchālā*, *duchālā* and *chauchālā*, *i e.*, houses with one, two or four thatches. Some of the walls are made of clay, some of unburnt bricks, some of branches of trees and bushes smeared over with clay, and others of wood and clay. Houses of the latter two kinds are called *jāhtībār* or *gurābār*, and the last kind is seen in places subject to inundation. Houses thatched with straw are common all over the district; in towns and populous villages masonry buildings are met with in fairly large numbers.

The houses are mainly of the Lower Bengal style of architecture with the ridge and eave lines curved and the thatch very thick. The reason for this style of architecture seems to be that in this part of the country the rainfall is so heavy that, unless very thick thatch is put on, water leaks through, especially along the corner beams of a *chauchālā* or four-thatched house.

CLOTHING. The ordinary clothing of a gentleman appearing at a social gathering in the cold weather consists of a *dhuti* or waistcloth of cotton, a shirt and coat, a shawl, and a pair of stockings and shoes. In other seasons of the year a *dhuti*, shirt or coat, a *chādar* and shoes are worn. When appearing at office, the clothing consists of pantaloons, a shirt, a *chapkān*, a *chādar*, and a pair of stockings and shoes; persons of somewhat higher position use *chogās*, or loose overcoats, instead of *chādars*. The ordinary clothing of a man of the middle classes consists of a *dhuti*, *chādar* and a pair of shoes or slippers; shirts and coats are also occasionally used. A cultivator wears merely a coarse *dhuti* and a scarf (*gāmchā*) thrown over the shoulders or wrapped around the waist. Men of the lower classes have a coarse *dhuti* only. In the cold weather shawls and various wrappers are used, such as the *banāts* made of serge

or broadcloth, the *dhusā* and *bālāposh* made of cotton and cloth, the *garbhasuti* woven with tusser and cotton thread, and the *gilap* or *pāchhuri*, which is a double *chādar* made of coarse cloth. The dress of the women generally consists of a *sārī* only; but in rich families the use of bodices and wrappers in the winter has been introduced. As a rule, females, with the exception of prostitutes, do not use shoes, shawls, or other garments used by the males.

AMUSEMENTS.

The amusements of the people consist chiefly of the *jātrā*, which is a theatrical entertainment given in the open air, *baithaki* songs, *i.e.*, songs in the *baithak* or general sitting-room, and dancing. All of these are accompanied by both vocal and instrumental music. The Hindus also are very fond of *Harisankīrtan*, *i.e.*, they sing and dance in the name of Hari (God). Sometimes *Harisankīrtan* continues without intermission for several days and nights, and is called, according to its duration, *ahorātrā* (one day and night), *chabbisprahar* (3 days and nights), *pancharātrā* (5 days and nights) and *nabarātrā* (9 days and nights).

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

GENERAL CONDITIONS.

BIRBHUM has long been noted for its salubrity, and, though it has suffered from time to time from severe epidemics of fever, is regarded as one of the healthiest districts in Bengal. Its healthiness is largely due to its physical formation, for the surface is undulating, the soil is porous, and the rivers, streams and valleys that traverse the country afford ample facilities for drainage. Here, however, as in other parts of Bengal, the staple crop is rice, which requires a large amount of water for its successful cultivation. Although, therefore, the nature of the soil and the formation of the land are unfavourable to the lodgement of water, during the paddy season every effort is made to retain it in the fields, and when it lies stagnant, it becomes the breeding ground of malaria-breeding mosquitoes. Tanks, moreover, are unusually numerous, the villages being remarkable for the abundance of small tanks dotted round them in a small compass. These tanks are lined with an almost impervious coating of black clay and silt; and the water in them becomes low in the hot weather, and, as they are rarely cleaned, very dirty. The people chiefly depend upon such tanks for their water-supply.

PRINCIPAL DISEASES. Burdwān fever.

So far as the records of the district extend, they show Bīrbhūm to have been singularly free from the ravages of epidemic fever. The first and worst epidemic of which there is any record was that known as the Burdwān fever, which caused a very great loss of population, the mortality during the few years in which it raged being estimated at 350,000.* From this loss of population the district is only now recovering. The fever first made its appearance in April 1871 in the alluvial tract of country in the south-east adjoining Burdwān. By October 1871 it had spread to most of the villages east of the railway, as far north as the Lābpur thāna, and also to a few villages south-west of the line. As the cold weather advanced,

* *Bengal Census Report of 1881*, p. 60.

the virulence of the fever began to decrease, and it subsided in March 1872. In July 1872 it appeared again in the south of the district, and by September it had spread as far as Mayūreswar in the north and Purandarpur to the west, the only portion of the district that was really free from the epidemic being the country to the west of Surī, which is higher and more sparsely populated than other parts. In 1873 there was some slight abatement of its ravages, and the year 1874 may be regarded as the last year of the epidemic, the fever being less fatal and less prevalent than in previous years. In 1875 the same facts were observed again, and what fever there was wanted the virulence of the epidemic, and had all the characteristics of the ordinary seasonal malarious fever of the country.

The causes of the fever have formed the subject of much discussion, which need not be recapitulated here. It will be sufficient to quote the opinion of the Civil Surgeon of Bīrbhūm, who wrote :—"I can come to no other conclusion than that the Burdwān fever was a non-contagious malarious fever, gradually increasing in severity in any given place as the malaria-producing condition of the soil became more and more developed, and gradually decreasing as that condition of the soil also passed away more or less completely ; that the disease was not communicated from individual to individual or from mass to mass, but broke out successively in different places in correspondence with the progress of its steadily advancing cause." That the fever did travel is not a matter for doubt. Like a flowing tide, it touched a place one year and receded, reached it again next year with greater force and again receded, repeating this process till it had passed over almost the whole district.

During the first year of its invasion the fever was mild, and there was a simultaneous increase of the general endemic fever and a subsidence of both usual at the end of the fever season. In the second year the fever began earlier than the ordinary country fever and earlier than the epidemic fever of the previous year ; it also lasted longer and caused greater mortality. During the third year the disease was marked by still larger mortality, both from primary attacks and secondary complications, the systems of those who had survived the two previous years being now so saturated with malaria, that they had little power to resist the attacks of the fever and fell rapid victims to it. During the fourth, fifth and sixth years, six years being the average duration of the fever in any place, there was a general and slow recovery, for the fever in each successive year attacked fewer persons, was of a less fatal type, and

prevailed for a shorter period. It finally disappeared altogether in the seventh year, but left many of its victims with permanently enlarged spleens and other complications to indicate the trial which the system had undergone.

When the epidemic was at its height, the fever appeared to be most intense in large and old villages where manure and filth had accumulated for years; but it was not confined to the places where sanitation was most deficient, or restricted to villages built in low or alluvial tracts. On the other hand, it was not severe in many large villages devoid of any attempt at sanitation, which were quite as unhealthy as any of the villages where hundreds had fallen victims. No caste or class of person was long able to resist the malady. At first the rich and well-to-do, and the Doms, Hāris and Bāgdis, enjoyed a certain immunity, but soon the fever affected all alike. Still, in the midst of the pestilence, when hundreds were laid low, some individuals often enjoyed perfect immunity. Weak, feeble persons escaped, while strong, vigorous men fell victims in the same house. Lastly, while in some families none died, in others nearly all perished.

The symptoms did not differ from those of other malarious fevers, with the exception that there was more pronounced prostration and a greater tendency to congestion of the internal organs. In some cases the fever returned daily, in others every second or third day, but more frequently its attacks were irregular. An attack generally lasted from seven to ten days; and after a period varying from ten days to three weeks, the fever recurred and went through the same course, leaving the patient weaker than before. Then followed another interval and another attack of fever, with increasing debility and loss of appetite. At this period, probably for the first time, palpable enlargement of the spleen or derangement of the liver was observed. These attacks continued to recur notwithstanding remedial measures; and gradually, sometimes rapidly, the patient became more and more prostrated, anæmic, or dropsical, until at last he succumbed to these complications or was carried off by diarrhœa. Occasionally the lungs became affected, and more rarely cerebral congestion supervened.

Later fever epidemics.

Just as the decade 1871-80 opened with an outbreak of fever in 1871, so the decade 1881-90 began with fever in 1881 and 1882; and it is a singular fact that the next decade also began (in 1891) with a very wide and general outbreak of a distressing but not very fatal type. As regards the epidemic of 1881-82, the Sanitary Commissioner wrote in 1881:—"Bīrbhūm was this year the

most unhealthy district in the Burdwān Division. The sickness was unprecedentedly great, and the mortality the heaviest ever known, exceeding that of the preceding year by 10·06 per 1,000. In fact, the disease raged as an epidemic throughout the length and breadth of the land, and the Civil Surgeon said that, from his experience of previous years, Burdwān did not fare worse in the height of its unhealthy seasons." Thānas Surī, Bolpur, Dubrājpur, Rāmpur Hāt and Nalhāti suffered the most, the mortality varying from 48·5 to 31·4 per 1,000. In the following year the epidemic was less severe, but the death-rate rose to 37·6 in the Nalhāti thāna. After that year there was a steady improvement, the decrease in the number of deaths being steady and progressive.

Since 1891 there have been no serious epidemics of fever, except in 1906 and 1907, when the district suffered from a wave of fever which steadily increased in intensity, the death-rate from fever alone rising to 38·27 per mille in 1907, and being the highest returned by any district in Bengal. In that year fever prevailed with epidemic intensity, village after village being attacked until the whole district was affected. A special enquiry was made, and it was ascertained that the increase of mortality was due to a very large extent to malarial fever of the malignant tertian type, though undoubtedly a large number of deaths were attributed to fever which were due to other causes. The fever abated in 1908, which before the breaking of the rains was an exceptionally dry year. Nearly all the tanks in the district dried up and had their bottoms excavated by the cultivators for the sake of the mud which is used as a soil-dressing. In this way the malarial infectivity of the tanks was destroyed, and infected anopheles mosquitos having nowhere to breed, died off.

Types of fever.

It is reported that the majority of the deaths returned as caused by fever are due to malarial fevers, of which the most common is the intermittent type and especially the quotidian variety. Next in order of frequency come tertian and then remittent fevers. The quartan fever is less frequent, while the double quotidian and double tertian fevers, though not unknown, are rarer still. Chronic malarial fevers with hypertrophied spleen and cachexia, as an effect of the above, are seen in many parts. Some local practitioners describe a sub-variety of remittent fever, which they call it "pernicious remittent," with diarrhoea, low muttering, delirium, prostration, coated tongue, etc. This is believed to be simply enteric fever. The records of the jail for 19 years, viz., 1887-1905, show that out of 1,125 cases ague

was present in no less than 1,059 cases, while there were 15 cases of remittent fever and 48 of influenza.

Other diseases.

Cholera appears in a sporadic form practically every year and sometimes becomes epidemic, but from 1892, when the present system of registering vital statistics was introduced, until 1905 the mortality caused by it in any one year was not greater than 3·15 per mille, that being the maximum reached in 1894. In 1906, 1907 and 1908, however, there were serious epidemics, causing a mortality of 4·66, 5·96 and 10·17 per mille respectively. Small-pox affects a few persons at the beginning of the hot weather and during its continuance, but the records do not show any serious epidemics. Leprosy, elephantiasis and hydrocele are said to be endemic, and other common diseases are scrotal tumours, cataracts and diseases of the ear, eye, skin, digestive organs and respiratory system.

Leprosy.

Leprosy is unusually prevalent, the census of 1901 showing that among males 3·2 per mille are afflicted and among females 1 per mille. In fact, this district and Bānkurā enjoy the unenviable notoriety of harbouring a greater number of lepers in proportion to the population than any other tract in India. The theory that leprosy is caused by the use of bad fish finds no corroboration in the excessive prevalence of the disease in Bīrbhūm, for very little fish is imported and it enters but slightly into the dietary of the people.

VACCINATION.

Vaccination is compulsory only in the municipality of Surī. There is a certain prejudice against it on the part of some people in the district, but this prejudice is growing fainter with the lapse of time. The number of persons successfully vaccinated in 1908-09 was 38,169, representing 42·71 per mille of the population, and the average annual ratio of successful operations during the previous five years was 33·36 per mille.

SANITATION.

It is reported that in Bīrbhūm village sanitation is still in a very primitive state. The value of communal hygiene is not understood, tanks being polluted and rubbish allowed to accumulate promiscuously. Communicable diseases, such as small-pox, are allowed to spread without measures being taken for segregation. Cholera is treated with greater respect, the people being afraid of the disease, but no care is taken to preserve drinking water in a state of purity during its visitation. The following account, written by the Civil Surgeon 30 years ago, gives a graphic description of the insanitary conditions prevailing in the district, and this account still to a large extent holds good. "The majority of the villages are built on slightly elevated spots—these sites being chosen more on account of their barrenness than from any sanitary advantage. The soil in these villages,

originally gravelly, may now be said to be alluvial, and saturated with manure and filth of all kinds. In the first place, in order to manure the land, every bit of filth or cow-dung is carefully stored in a pit very near the gate or compound, sometimes inside the *bāri*, or on the side of a tank. Here ashes, sweepings, scales and bones of fish, refuse of vegetables, and other rubbish are also thrown, and at certain seasons of the year a heap five or six feet in height may be seen near every dwelling. Just before the rains, this rubbish is transported to the fields. This plan, adopted to ensure a good crop, and worse from a sanitary point of view than retention of stagnant water in the fields, has saturated the soil round about the houses until the earth may be said to be reeking with dung, and unable to absorb any more. I ask, is it surprising that fevers and other diseases cling to such localities?

"The above practice no doubt is sufficiently appalling, but it is not all. There are numerous tanks and ponds in every village, originally fifteen or twenty feet deep, but now not more than ten, owing to the deposition of animal and vegetable matter, or decay of rank weeds or leaves thrown, washed, or blown into them. These tanks contain the drinking water of the people, and the water in some of them in dry weather is actually as thick as pea-soup. The sides of these tanks and ponds are sometimes used to store manure, but oftener are resorted to by children to ease themselves. I have also on several occasions seen men and women avail themselves of convenient places to solicit nature. Human as well as animal ordure may be seen in by-lanes. The streets are narrow, and have been worn down so as to form a hollow and act as drains or waterways in the rains; and they perform this duty very effectually, for a village after a few showers looks comparatively clean. Generally the streets conduct the rain water to the tanks; occasionally the water is directed into a field.

"From the above description of a village, it will be gathered that the rain water, as it passes along the streets, carries with it quantities of all kinds of animal and vegetable matter, from human ordure, animal and fish bones, to urine, filth and decayed substances in a fine state of subdivision; all are dissolved or washed along, to be eventually deposited in the ponds and tanks from whence the drinking water is derived."

MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS.

There are three charitable dispensaries in the district giving in-door relief, viz.—(1) the dispensary at Surī, with seven beds for male patients and seven for female patients; (2) that at Rāmpur Hāt, with four beds for men and two beds for women; and (3) the

Lady Curzon Zanāna Hospital at Surī with five beds for women. There are also three public out-door dispensaries at Bolpur, Chellā and Nalhāti, and three private out-door dispensaries at Hetampur, Kirnahar and Lābpur, the first maintained by the Rājā Bahādur of Hetampur, the second by the zamīndār of Kirnahar, and the third by the zamīndār of Lābpur.

CHAPTER V.

AGRICULTURE.

GENERAL CONDITIONS. THE western portion of the district consists of undulating uplands broken up by wedge-shaped depressions, which receive detritus from the high lands that hem them, and have a plentiful supply of water from the drainage of the slopes. Rice is grown in these depressions and in terraces up the slopes, but the crests of the ridges, being composed of a sterile laterite soil, do not admit of its cultivation. Generally, the surface for a few feet in depth is occupied by a red soil derived from the decomposition of the solid laterite lying below, but frequently the rock crops up in large masses. In the east of the district the land is low and of alluvial formation. The soil is mostly a light sandy loam, which is enriched in some cases by detritus from the uplands and sometimes by silt from the overflow of the rivers which traverse this part of the country. As a rule, however, these rivers, when in flood, only deposit sand, and embankments have been built in many cases to protect the area under cultivation from its drifts. *Aman* or winter rice is the most important crop of the district, the bulk of the cultivable land being reserved for it. The only other crop of importance is *āus* rice, for other *bhadoi* crops are but little grown, while *rabi* crops occupy a very small area, mainly in the Nalhāti and Murarai thānas.

CLASSES OF LAND. Land, as distinguished from soil, is divided into 13 classes, viz.—(1) *do*, (2) *sunā*, (3) *sāli*, (4) *ola* or *olan*, (5) *jedāngā* or *dāngā*, (6) *pat-jami* or mulberry land, (7) *jangal bhūmi*, (8) *pāner baraj*, (9) *ghās*, (10) *sarbera*, (11) *bāstu*, (12) *salghor* and (13) *patit*.

Do land. *Do* land has a rich soil, on which *āus* or autumn rice is generally grown, besides gram, *masūri*, peas, wheat, linseed, *khesāri*, *til*, sugarcane and occasionally cotton. There is thus a great choice of crops and small risk of total failure. *Do* lands are subdivided into three classes—*awal*, *doem* and *soem*, *i.e.*, first, second and third class. First class lands are cultivated with *āus* rice, which is cut in September or October. The land is then manured and ploughed, and cold weather crops are sown broadcast, *e.g.*, gram, wheat, *masūri*, linseed, *khesāri*, peas and mustard. When the cold weather crop has been taken off the ground, the land, after being again manured and ploughed, is sown with *til*. When

this has been reaped, the time for sowing rice has come round again. Sugarcane is also grown on *do* land.

Second class *do* land is not so easily irrigated as the first class, and is also inferior in yield. The same crops may be grown on it as on the latter, or, instead of the cold weather crops above mentioned, either onions or garlic, after which a crop of *kāshta til* may be raised. The latter has a seed somewhat larger and lighter in colour than that of *krishna til* or black *til*. *Soem do*, *i.e.*, *do* land of the third class, resembles *do* of the second class, but is inferior both in yield and in point of irrigation.

Sunā. *Sunā* lands differ from *do* lands in having a smaller amount of moisture and in being unsuitable for the cultivation of sugarcane. Other crops that grow on *do* lands also grow on *sunā* lands, but the quantity of produce is smaller and the cost of cultivation greater. *Sunā* lands are subdivided into (1) *sunā korpa* or *awal sunā*, (2) *dāem sunā* and (3) *soem sunā*.

Sāli. *Sāli* lands are similarly subdivided into (1) *jol* or *awal*, (2) *doem* and (3) *soem*. First class *sāli* land consists of moist muddy land which will bear three crops in the year, viz., a crop of *āman* rice, a crop of *khesāri*, and a crop of *kāshta til*. The *āman* is sown in March and April, and is reaped in November and December. *Khesāri* is sown among the rice as it begins to ripen, and is cut in February and March. *Til* is sown about the middle of March, and ripens early in May. The best *sāli* land lies a little lower than that of the second class, and therefore, when rain falls, gets all the silt of the higher levels; it is also easier to irrigate. *Sāli* land of the second class yields two crops, *āman* rice and *til*, the outturn being about one-third less. Third class *sāli* land is situated still higher, and the yield of rice is less than that of second class and about half that of first class *sāli* land.

Jedāngā. *Jedāngā* or *dāngā* is a high poor land found near homesteads and also in the open plains; *niras* or juiceless is the word used to describe it. It is difficult of irrigation, and bears but one crop in the year, either *arahar*, *san* or Indian hemp, and *baigun* or brinjals. Orchards or groves of mango, jack and other fruit trees are also found on this land.

Olan. *Olan* or *ola* land is land covered with silt along the river banks. It is very fertile, but liable to inundation, as its name (*olan*, meaning low) indicates. It is generally devoted to the growth of cucurbitaceous plants, such as *tarmuj* or water melon, *kānkur*, *lāu* or gourd, *uchhe*, *karalā* and *khero*, a species of gourd very common in this district.

Pat-jami. *Pat-jami* or mulberry land is of two kinds, known as *dihi tut* and *māthāl tut*. The first is high land near the village, which

is particularly favourable to mulberry cultivation, and the second is high land in the open away from the villages, which is said to be not so strong as *dihi tut*. Near Ganutiā, on the bank of the Mor, mulberry is grown in *paiwasti* or *media*, *i.e.*, alluvial lands, which are said to be the best of all as they do not require manuring.

Jangal-bhūmi. *Jangal-bhūmi* are lands reserved for the growth of *sāl* trees. When the *sāl* trees get old, they are cut and sold for timber, and young shoots sprouting from the roots of the old trees are again reared. The trees are sold standing as well as after being cut. A large number of trees are also cut when young and sold for fuel.

Pān-baraj. *Pān-baraj* is land on which betel grows. *Methel* land, *i.e.*, land mostly composed of clay which keeps continually moist, is best suited for its cultivation, and banks of tanks and marsh lands are selected for the purpose.

Ghās lands. *Ghās* is reserved grass land, and is subdivided into *kāti ghās* *i.e.*, places whence grass is cut for fodder, and *charai ghās*, *i.e.*, pasture land.

Sarbera *Sarbera* are sandy lands, generally on river banks, where the *sar* reed grows wild. This reed is used for thatching and also for preparing *pāner-baraj*, *i.e.*, shade for betel plants. Grass sometimes grows in *sarbera* lands in places where there are small deposits of mud, and such lands are used for pasture.

Bāstu. *Bāstu*, *i.e.*, homestead lands, are divided into *nijbāstu* and *udbāstu*. *Nijbāstu* is land on which the house stands, and *udbāstu* is land about the homestead. The latter is again subdivided into *tarkāribāstu*, *i.e.*, the lands within the courtyard, and *saribāstu*, *i.e.*, lands lying about the enclosed part of the house. Cucurbitaceous plants, such as pumpkins and gourds, are planted in *tarkāribāstu* lands and are trained on the thatching of cottages. A few chillies, plantains, brinjals, *karalā*, *uchhe* and *dingli* are grown on *saribāstu* land, but the greater portion of it generally lies fallow. While almost all the villagers have *tarkāribāstu*, few have *saribāstu* land.

Salghar. *Salghar* is fallow land on which huts are raised and mills are erected for storing and pressing sugarcane and for boiling the juice into *gur* or molasses.

Patit-jami. *Patit-jami* or fallow lands are subdivided into the following classes:—(1) *Shābek patit* or *dāngā patit* is land always left waste, for which no rent is ever paid. Generally it is the highest land of all and consists of stiff clay or laterite. (2) *Hāl patit* or *fasal patit* is land which, having been cultivated, lies fallow. Such land may have been left uncultivated owing to deposits

of sand; or it may be of so high a level, or so situated in regard to water, as to make irrigation too expensive, and is therefore only worth bringing under cultivation in years when there is a plentiful rainfall. Rent is nevertheless paid for such land according to its class, unless the zemīndār allows the ryot to relinquish it or unless the ryot chooses to relinquish the whole of his holding. (3) *Rosad patit* is fallow land which, though included in a ryot's holding, is not assessed to rent. Such lands are generally included by the zamīndār in a ryot's holding with the object of keeping up an exercise of possession in them and of barring the acquisition by others of rights by prescription or limitation. (4) *Gochar patit* is common pasture land, consisting of small plots of common attached to the village and yielding poor herbage. This land belongs to the landholders, who do not charge their ryots rent for grazing their cattle upon it.

The following is an account of the soils of the district: SOILS. *Metel* is a clay soil retentive of moisture, which is best suited for growing winter paddy, sugarcane, wheat, gram and *kalai*. *Entel* (literally sticky) is a brownish clay, which becomes very sticky when wet, and gets hard and cracks in long fissures on drying. It is a poor soil, capable of producing paddy only if manured, and will not grow *rabi* crops even with irrigation. *Bāga-entel* (literally, *entel* having the colour of a tiger) is a reddish soil, sticky and tenacious, which contains limestone nodules. It becomes very hard when dry, and is retentive of moisture for a longer period than any other soil. Like *entel*, it is a poor soil capable of producing paddy only if manured. *Pali* is a deposit of silt in the bed of a river, loose, friable and yellowish in colour. It is a very rich soil, and is well suited for sugarcane, wheat, gram, potatoes, cabbages and other vegetables. Not much paddy is grown on *pali*, as it is generally reserved for more valuable crops. It will grow *rabi* crops even without irrigation, and provides an excellent earth for pottery. *Reti* or *ret* is generally a synonym for *pali*, but sometimes the term is reserved for a lighter variety of *pali*. It is a reddish, loose and friable alluvial soil. It does not grow rice and is best suited for vegetables, wheat, barley, etc. It is a moist soil which will grow *rabi* crops without irrigation.

Bindi is a sandy soil which improves with continued cultivation. It is reddish, loose and friable, but not retentive of moisture; it is a poor soil capable of producing paddy, and will also grow *rabi* crops if irrigated. *Doānsh* is a mixture of clay and sand, forming a blackish, loose and friable soil, not very

retentive of moisture. It is a rich soil, suitable for all sorts of crops—indeed, in some places *doānsh* is held superior even to *metel.* For *rabi* crops, however, it requires irrigation. *Bele* is a whitish, loose and friable soil, not retentive of moisture. It is a poor soil suited only for paddy and vegetables, and will not grow *rabi* crops even with irrigation. *Kankare* (literally gravelly) is a reddish, loose and friable laterite soil containing ferruginous concretions. It is a poor soil, capable of growing *bājrā*, maize, *kurthi*, peas, *maruā* and *gondli.* It will also grow *rabi* crops with irrigation, and the jack tree does very well in it. *Bāstu* (literally, homestead land) is largely used for *rabi* crops. It is a blackish friable rich soil, which is manured with cow-dung, ashes and other refuse from the village. It is not retentive of moisture, but is well suited for paddy, sugarcane, wheat, peas, linseed, *til*, tobacco, maize and *bājrā*.

IRRIGATION. The district having, for the most part, a porous soil and rapid drainage, artificial irrigation is necessary in years of scanty rainfall, especially for rice grown on terraced slopes. When the rainfall is ample and seasonable, there is little need of it, for the cultivators divide their fields into numerous little plots and enclose each by a raised bank which retains the rain water. Each plot is thus a small reservoir, and the lower fields can be irrigated by letting water into them from those at a higher level. Well irrigation is not practised except in the case of garden produce, and tanks are the most usual source from which the fields are watered. Several of these tanks are old and of large size, *e.g.*, the Dantindīghī one mile from Dubrājpur, the Raipur Sair four miles south of Surī, and the Lambadarpur Sair a mile north-west of the same place. Smaller tanks are very numerous, and it has been estimated that each village has at least five on the average. In the village of Sankarpur, for instance, there are 111 tanks occupying 167 acres, and 46 are so close to each other, that mere footpaths on the top of the banks separate one from another. Owing, however, to the neglect of the zamīndārs (many of them absentees) and the apathy of the population at large, many of the irrigation tanks have silted up and become useless; some of them have become so dry that they are let out for cultivation.

Water-lifts. When the tanks are full, water is let into the fields through a cut in their banks. When the water is low, the cultivators raise it by means of the *cheni*, or swing basket, or by an instrument called *dhuni.* The former is merely a scoop made of matting with ropes attached to its four corners. It is worked by two men, each of whom holds two of them; after dipping the scoop in

the water, they tilt its contents into the channel leading to the field to be irrigated. The *dhuni* or *drauni* consists of a trough with a bend in the middle, or rather towards one end, the two portions of the trough being of unequal length. The shorter end is closed, and is called the *ānkrā*. The whole moves upon a pivot; and to the end of the *ānkrā* is attached a rope, which is fastened to one end of an elevated lever, the other end of the lever bearing a counter-balancing weight. The *ānkrā* is dipped into the tank, and when filled, the weight is released and drags up the closed end, pouring the water through the open end of the trough into the irrigating channel. Irrigation by the *teura*, a kind of Grecian lever, is also common. The *do* fields on the banks are largely irrigated by this means, the crops for which the *teura* is used being sugarcane, oil-seeds, flax and vegetables.

The following table shows the normal acreage of the principal crops and their proportion to the normal net cropped area according to statistics prepared by the Agricultural Department. PRINCIPAL CROPS.

Name of crop.	Normal acreage.	Percentage on normal net cropped area.
Winter rice	604,600	77
Sugarcane	9,000	1
Total *aghani* crops ...	613,600	78
Autumn rice	144,100	18
Jowār	100	...
Indian corn	1,900	...
Other *bhadoi* cereals and pulses ...	200	...
Other *bhadoi* food-crops	1,400	...
Til (bhadoi)	500	...
Other *bhadoi* non-food crops ...	2,800	...
Total *bhadoi* crops	151,000	19
Wheat	5,000	1
Barley	300	...
Gram	7,000	1
Other *rabi* cereals and pulses ...	3,500	...
Other *rabi* food-crops	1,000	...
Linseed	800	...
Rape and mustard	2,000	...
Til (rabi)	400	...
Other oil-seeds	200	...
Other *rabi* non-food crops	700	...
Total *rabi* crops ...	20,900	3
Orchards and garden produce ...	25,000	3
Twice cropped area ...	23,900	3

The most noticeable point brought out by these figures is the predominance of rice, on which the cultivators almost entirely depend.

EXTENSION AND IMPROVEMENT OF CULTIVATION. The area under cultivation has been greatly extended during the last half century by the Santāls, who have reclaimed large tracts of jungle in the west of the district. According to the returns for 1907-08, the net cropped area is 650,900 acres. Current fallows account for 243,460 acres, culturable waste other than fallows occupy 90,000 acres, and the area not available for cultivation is 136,920 acres. Of recent years much has been done to improve the methods of cultivation by the institution of the Surī Cattle and Produce Show, which is managed by a committee of local gentlemen under the presidency of the Collector, and has been held annually for the last 13 years. At this show prizes are given for local agricultural produce; and approved seeds and manures, as well as modern agricultural implements, are brought to the ryots' notice. A District Agricultural Association has also been started, the members of which have experimented with different crops, *e.g.*, varieties of cotton, *samundrabali* paddy, Central Provinces *āus* paddy, English vegetables, Muzaffarnagar wheat, and ground-nuts.

CATTLE. Oxen and buffaloes are used for agricultural purposes, sheep are reared for purposes of trade, and goats and pigs for local consumption. Besides doing plough work, bullocks are used as beasts of burden, for drawing carts and carrying packs of grain or other merchandise; they are also yoked in the oil-mills. Buffaloes are occasionally sold for purposes of sacrifice at the Durgā and Kālī Pūjās, but otherwise they are kept merely for ploughing or for their milk. Horses, ponies, and asses are very few in number. The goats and sheep are of an indigenous breed and are mostly kept by Muhammadans. The he-goat is a frequent victim at Hindu *pūjās*, and his flesh is eaten. Musalmāns eat the flesh of she-goats, and also, to some extent, mutton. Pigs are kept by Hāris, Doms, Bauris and other very low castes, for their own eating.

The local breed of cattle is poor, in spite of the attempts made to improve it, for the cultivators and graziers give very little care or attention to breeding. Since the establishment, however, of the Surī Cattle and Produce Show, and of a dairy farm at Surī, they have begun to take more interest in this important matter. Some Hissar and English bulls have also been imported by the District Board and the Surī Cattle Show Committee for the improvement of the local varieties; and a veterinary dispensary has been opened at Surī.

There is a growing difficulty in finding good pasturage for the cattle owing to the extension of cultivation, and grazing grounds are scarce in the east of the district. Here practically the only grazing lands are small plots of common near the villages which yield a poor and scanty grass No rent is charged for the right of pasturage over them, and there is a tacit understanding that they shall be reserved for this purpose by the zamīndār. These commons and the chance herbage found in uncultivated and uncultivable land, on the tank banks or the raised boundaries of the fields, and the stuble left in the rice fields, provide all the grazing of plough cattle, and have to be supplemented by fodder consisting of rice straw. In the west there are still pasture lands on the uplands, but the *sāl* forests in which the cattle used to graze have mostly been cut down.

CHAPTER VI.

NATURAL CALAMITIES.

EARLY FAMINES. BIRBHUM is not liable, in any marked degree, to famine or flood, and no drought or inundation has occurred during the experience of the present generation on a scale sufficiently large to affect its general prosperity. This immunity from famine is largely due to the fact that the means of transit are sufficient to prevent the danger of isolation in the event of a local failure of the crops, and to avert widespread suffering by importation from other districts. The old records show, however, that formerly Bīrbhūm frequently suffered from droughts and failure of the harvests. As already stated in Chapter II, it was devastated by the famine of 1770, more than one-third of the cultivable land being returned as deserted in 1771, while in 1776 four acres lay waste for every seven that remained under cultivation. In 1791 the crops suffered so severely from drought, that the Collector recommended a suspension of revenue to the extent of nearly Rs. 60,000; and, to avoid such disasters, large *golās*, or granaries of rice, were erected near Surī. This expedient having proved a failure, the 18 *golās* which had been built were sold in 1796 for Rs. 200, and 26,000 maunds of rice and 600 maunds of paddy for less than Rs. 9,000—a heavy loss, for the price of rice was nearly Rs. 2 per maund. In 1800, and again in 1803, there was drought owing to a failure of the rains, that of 1803 being described as "an extraordinary drought." The prices were so high, that the Collector, Mr. R. Thackery (father of the novelist), proposed a special enquiry to ascertain how much grain the district could properly export and then to have the remainder sold at fixed prices. Distress also prevailed in 1829 and 1837, the price of rice in the former year rising from 50 to 36 seers per rupee.* The district suffered again from scanty rainfall during the years 1865 to 1867, and in 1866 the maximum price of common rice was 8 seers per rupee.

FAMINE OF 1874. The famine of 1874 was severely felt in Bīrbhūm, which had already suffered from several bad seasons and from the epidemic

* E. G. Drake-Brockman, *Notes on the Early Administration of Birbhum.*

of fever known as Burdwān fever. The weather during 1872 was unseasonable, the rainfall during the ploughing season being very scanty. The rice crop was, therefore, a short one, except towards the east, where the rainfall was greater than in the rest of the district, and where irrigation is more general than in the western parts. It was not from unfavourable harvests alone that Bīrbhūm suffered in this antecedent period, for the Burdwān fever, which had for some time previously afflicted Bīrbhūm in common with the neighbouring districts, assumed in 1872 a more virulent type and invaded a wider area. Next year the rainfall in Bīrbhūm was normal in quantity, but very abnormal in distribution. The usual rainfall in May and June is nearly 11 inches, but in those two months only 5 inches fell. In July the normal fall is 13 inches; in July 1873 almost double that quantity fell. Instead of an interval of fine weather after such heavy rain, there were 17·50 inches in August 1873, *i.e.*, 5 inches more than usual. Finally in September and October, when abundant moisture is wanted, not more than about 4½ inches fell instead of a normal fall of about 14 inches. The rainfall in Bīrbhūm in 1873 affords a striking example of how sufficient moisture may be neutralized by unseasonable distribution.

The effect of this abnormal weather on the harvests varied with the crops and the localities in which they were raised; but in December 1873 the Collector, summing up the results of the harvest, stated that in the district as a whole there had been nine-sixteenths of an average autumn (*āus*) rice and three-eighths of an average winter rice (*āman*) harvest. The premature cessation of the rains also affected the cold weather crops, the cultivators being unable to till the parched lands. Thus, a serious failure of the rice crops was succeeded by an almost total failure of the cold weather crops, viz., wheat, mustard, oil-seeds, etc.—a failure absent from the scarcity of 1865-66, which did not affect the later crops. The effect of this deficiency was soon reflected in the markets. In the early months of normal years the price of rice, which is the main article of diet in this district, had previously been about 27 seers for the rupee; but prices began to rise in September 1873, and in the beginning of 1874 rice sold at double the usual rate. The effect of high prices and diminished supplies first showed itself in Bīrbhūm, as elsewhere throughout the distressed area, in the contraction of private charity and appeals by the mendicant classes for public relief. This occurred early in the year, and was followed in March 1874 by want among the labouring classes to whom the failure of the crops meant the denial of harvesting employment, by which they in a great measure subsist.

As the hot weather wore on, the prospect became still more gloomy. On the 8th May the Collector reported:—"The position has been sensibly altered for the worse. Pauperism and crime have increased, the cultivators are being reluctantly forced on the relief works by distress; cholera and small-pox are ravaging the district. Rice is not procurable in many villages at market rates, though still to be had without difficulty in the principal marts." The distress was greatest in August, when there were at one time 38,321 persons in receipt of charitable relief and 9,866 on relief works. Next month the price of rice reached its highest rate, viz., 11½ seers per rupee, and after that it gradually fell. Throughout the scarcity, however, there was no actual failure of the markets, the district continuing to export grain up to August. Indeed, the exports of food grains during the 12 months ending in September 1874 exceeded the imports by nearly 1,400 tons, though the imports included some 3,000 tons sent by Government for the purpose of relief.

Charitable relief began in the end of February, but in the end of March only 683 persons were being gratuitously fed. The number rose to 3,600 in the beginning of May, to 9,801 by the end of that month, and to 18,014 in the end of June. In August and September between 30,000 and 40,000 were in daily receipt of charitable relief. In all, 1,725 tons of rice were gratuitously distributed, 800 tons advanced on loan and 1,004 tons paid as wages. At the same time, Rs. 49,456 were expended in charitable relief, Rs. 64,809 in wages, and Rs. 61,615 advanced on loan. Labourers employed on relief works numbered on a daily average 3,846 in April, 8,054 in May, 10,352 in June, 6,655 in July, 7,826 in August, and 5,194 in September. Relief operations ceased in the end of October, with the incoming of the rice harvest, for fortunately the rainfall was both seasonable and abundant. In November-December the harvesting of *āman* rice caused prices, which had steadily kept up to abnormal rates till then, to fall rapidly, and they resumed their normal standard at the end of December.

SCARCITY OF 1885. In 1885 there was again scarcity necessitating relief measures in some parts of the district, which had suffered from an unfavourable distribution of the rainfall in 1884. The rainfall was abundant in June, July and August of that year, and there was every prospect of a bumper crop. In September, however, it was very scanty, and in October, when it was most wanted, there was practically no rain at all. In more favourable localities the *āus* crop was sufficiently advanced to yield a 12 annas harvest instead of the 16 or 18 annas hoped for at first; but on the high lands

cultivated by the Santāls an outturn of only 2 annas was obtained. They were recompensed, however, by an excellent crop of maize. Elsewhere the outturn of the *āus* crop lay between these two extremes, and was estimated at 5 annas of an average crop in the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision and at 6 annas in the Suri subdivision. The outturn of the *āman* crop depended entirely on the facilities for irrigation, and the yield varied from 4 annas, where irrigation was impossible, to 12 annas, wherever sufficient water from tanks or streams was available. The Rāmpur Hāt subdivision fared worse than the Sadar subdivision, the average outturn in the former being estimated at 7 annas, and in the latter at 8 to 9 annas. The outturn of *āman* for the whole district was 8 annas only.

In September 1884 distress began to be felt in many parts of the district, especially in thāna Nalhāti, round Shāhpur, and to the south-east of Surī. Towards the end of the year, when the *āman* harvest was going on, the pressure was relieved; but in 1885 distress gradually became acute as the year advanced, and it was found necessary to undertake relief operations. The late advent of the monsoon caused no little anxiety, but fortunately the rains, though late, were plentiful and seasonably distributed, and by the 19th November 1885 all relief operations were brought to a close. The area and population of the affected tracts are shown in the margin.

	Area in square miles.	Population.
Nalhāti ...	110	55,000
Murarai and Rājgāon	24	12,000
Rāmpur Hāt ...	30	15,000
Shāhpur ...	42	21,000
Ilāmbazar ...	28	14,000
Ganutiā ...	24	12,000
Total ...	258	129,000

Charitable relief was started in March 1885, and the daily average number in receipt of relief in the latter end of June was 14,340, of whom 5,841 were relieved by private agencies. Relief works were opened, the total expenditure amounting to Rs. 18,530. Government also spent Rs. 22,297 on charitable relief, so that the total amount spent by the State was Rs. 40,827, besides Rs. 9,561 raised by public subscription. The efforts of the Government officers were supplemented by private associations. The two principal associations engaged in relief work were Calcutta bodies, viz., the Sādhāran Brāhmo Samāj, with a temporary head-quarters at Nalhāti, and the Indian Association, with head-quarters at Nawādā, 8 miles east of Nalhāti. In the Rāmpur Hāt thāna two local associations, the Sadbhāb Uddipani Sabhā and the Hari Sabhā, also assisted in the work of charitable distribution.

FLOODS. Widespread floods are uncommon, but excessive rain sometimes causes serious inundations from the river Ajai, Hinglā, Mor, Bānsloi and Brāhmanī. Formerly such inundations appear to have been both numerous and disastrous. In 1787 there was a high flood which, it is said, in some places "swept off villages, inhabitants and cattle, the crops on the ground, with everything that was movable." We again read of a sudden and extraordinary rise of the Mor and Ajai rivers in 1806, when the floods washed away whole villages, "destroying many cattle and much property of the inhabitants, several of whom lost their lives." In this year the rivers rose on the 28th September and inundated the country, so that on their banks there was not a hut to be seen. The people climbed trees and remained there during the night of the 28th and the whole of the 29th and 30th. Large tracts of land were laid waste and covered with sand several feet deep. The value of property destroyed was over 1½ lakhs of rupees, while nearly 24,000 *bighās* of land were thrown out of cultivation.*

The most serious flood in recent years was that which occurred in September 1902. This flood was caused by the heavy rain of the preceding twenty-four hours, which caused the Brāhmanī in thāna Murarai, the Bānsloi in Nalhāti, and the Mor in thāna Surī to rise rapidly and, overflowing their banks, inundate the surrounding country—in some places to a depth of 10 to 12 feet. The Mor flooded the road to Muhammadbazar, destroyed the masonry bridge over it, and damaged several villages on its north bank. The villages near the railway line in the neighbourhood of the Brāhmanī and Bānsloi were washed away by the rush of water, as the floods could not force their way through the narrow openings allowed in the bridges of the railway embankment. The line was breached in several places between Nalhāti and Murarai, and through traffic was suspended. Great loss was caused to cultivators in the four thānas of the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision, and more especially Nalhāti and Murarai. Nearly 136 villages were more of less damaged, 800 houses were washed away, and 1,800 more were damaged.

CYCLONES. Cyclones are rare in this district, which apparently lies off their regular track. The cyclone of 1874, which worked havoc in other parts of the Burdwān Division, was only slightly felt here. At Surī isolated groups of trees were attacked and blown down, as if they had come under a cannonade, while other groups of trees close to them were uninjured. The only other cyclone

* E. G. Drake-Brockman, *Notes on the Early Administration of Birbhum*.

calling for mention occurred in June 1902. It passed through the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision, and derailed the up-passenger train between Rāmpur Hāt and Nalhāti at a distance of 1½ miles from Rāmpur Hāt. The train was wrecked, several passengers lost their lives, and others were injured.

The earthquake of the 12th of June 1897 was felt in this district, but it caused very little injury, only a few of the public buildings and some private residences being cracked. EARTHQUAKES.

CHAPTER VII.

RENTS, WAGES AND PRICES.

CASH RENTS.

THE rates of rent paid in cash vary according to the class of land under cultivation, and the following are reported to be those current in different parts of the district: In thāna Surī the rent of ordinary rice land is Rs. 3 to Rs. 9 per acre (Re. 1 to Rs. 3 per *bighā*), while that of the best quality of land yielding sugarcane and other valuable crops is Rs. 9 to Rs. 12 per acre. Near Rāmpur Hāt the rent for rice land is, on the average, Rs. 6 per acre, and for the best lands producing sugarcane and other crops Rs. 9. Near Mallārpur from Rs. 3 to Rs. 6 per acre is obtained for rice land, from Rs. 7 to Rs. 8 for sugarcane lands, Rs. 15 for land growing vegetables, and Rs. 80 per acre for *pān* (betel-leaf) plots. Near Sainthiā rice land pays a rent of Rs. 6 to Rs. 9 per acre, and in thāna Dubrājpur the prevailing rates for such lands are Rs. 3 to Rs. 9 per acre. Near Ilāmbazar, in the south of the district, the prevailing rates are the same as at Dubrājpur, but recently assessed *dāngā* (high) lands of the lowest quality bear a rent of 8 annas to 12 annas per *bighā* or Re. 1-8 to Rs. 2-8 per acre. In some parts of the district the rent rate is as low as 4 annas to 6 annas per *bighā* for high lands growing maize or *kodo*.

PRODUCE RENTS.

Ryots who do not personally till their lands, sublet either the whole or a part to cultivators or labourers on a system of produce rents. One common form of this system is that known as *krishāni jot* or *hāl krishi krishāni*, in which the ryot supplies the seed, manure, ploughs, cattle, etc., required for cultivation, and the *krishān* is a labourer who tills the fields being remunerated by a third of the produce; the ryot gets the other two-thirds and all the straw. This, however, would perhaps be more properly described as a form of labour contract rather than as an under-tenure. There are four forms of the produce rent system proper, viz.—(1) *ardha bhāg jot*, (2) *athāra-baisa jot*, (3) *pānch-ardha jot*, and (4) *thīkā jot*. Under the *ardha-bhāg jot* (or *bhāg jot*) system half the produce goes to the ryot who lets the field, and the other half and all the straw are retained by the lessee, who bears all the cost of cultivation. The *athāra baisa* system is the same, except that the under-tenant's share of the produce is $\frac{18}{40}$ths and the

lessor's $\frac{22}{40}$ths. Under the *pānch-ardha* system the lessor provides manure and the actual cultivator retains $\frac{3}{5}$ths of the grain and $\frac{1}{5}$th of the straw, the remainder being paid as rent. Under the *thikā jot* system the cultivator meets all the expenses of cultivation and is bound to pay a fixed amount of paddy or rice as rent to the superior holder. The latter is free from all risks, such as bad seasons, and the cultivator has to pay the amount fixed whatever may be the outturn.

SETTLEMENTS OF RENT.

No general settlement of rents has been carried out in the district, but some private estates have come under survey and settlement. Among recent rent settlements may be mentioned that of Mallārpur in thāna Mayūreswar and of Hukmapur in thāna Surī, which took place in 1893-94. The maximum, minimum and average rate per acre for wet cultivation was Rs. 6, Rs. 3 and Rs. 4-8 respectively, and for dry cultivation Rs. 4-8, Rs. 3 and Rs. 3-8 per acre respectively. The assessment for Sāntal ryots was nearly half of that of the Bengali ryots, excess land held by the latter being assessed at the rate of Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 3-12 per acre, while the rate fixed for the former was from Re. 1-4 to Rs. 2-8 per acre.

In 1899-1900 the *ghātuāli* service lands were resumed, the average rental assessed ranging from Re. 1 to Rs. 4-8 per *bighā* of rice land. The average assessment per *bighā* of the *chaukidāri chākrān* lands transferred to zamīndārs was from Re. 1 to Rs. 3. More recently three private estates, Dubrājpur, Shallampur and Kendgoria, have been settled under the Bengal Tenancy Act.

WAGES.

The following table shows the daily wages paid for different classes of labour in 1895, 1900, 1905 and 1909:—

Class of labour.	1895.	1900.	1905.	1909.
	As. P.	As.	As.	Rs. A. P.
Common mason	5 0	6	8	0 8 0
Superior "	10 0	10	10 to 12	0 10 0 to 0 12 0
Common carpenter	5 0	6	8	0 8 0
Superior "	10 0	10	12	1 0 0 to 1 4 0
Common blacksmith	5 6	6	8	1 0 0 to 1 4 0
Superior "	10 0	10	12	1 8 0 to 2 0 0
Male adult cooly	4 0	4	4	0 4 6
Female " "	1 6	2	2	0 2 0 to 0 3 0

It is somewhat interesting to compare the present rate of coolies' wages with that current in 1809, when one anna a day was the labourer's hire.

Agricultural labour is generally not paid in cash but in kind, the cultivator employing labourers by the year, who work his land under his supervision. At the time of harvest these labourers are given one-third of the produce *minus* the advances they have received, this system being known as the *krishāni* system. The village artisans are also paid in kind, and generally have a regular clientele. Each of their customers calls them in for any job for which they are wanted and pays them a fixed quantity of grain a year, generally 30 seers or 1 maund of paddy. There is one class of servants kept in Muhammadan families whose condition is very low. They consist of orphans and their children who have been rescued from want and brought up in the house; they are called *khānejad gulām* if male, and *khānejad bāndi* if female. A *gulām* ranks lower than a paid menial servant, can only marry a *bāndi*, and when eating. is not allowed to seat on the same cloth with any one but a *gulām*.

PRICES. The following table shows the prices (per standard maund of 40 seers) of common articles of food in selected years during the last 120 years:—

	1788.	1872.	1886.	1908.
	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.
Finest rice ...	1 9 0	1 9 0	2 1 3	10 0 0
Fine " ...	1 3 6	1 5 10	......	8 0 0
Common " ...	1 0 9	1 4 5	1 13 4	5 0 0
" paddy ...	0 7 11	0 13 3	0 12 0	2 8 0
Kalai	1 15 9	1 11 4	1 9 0	5 0 0
Salt	4 8 10	4 7 0	3 2 4	1 15 0
Oil	8 11 10	15 9 6	15 0 0	25 0 0
Ghī	12 2 3	27 5 2	28 0 0	40 0 0
Sugar	6 13 3	10 14 8	9 12 0	10 0 0

MATERIAL CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE. According to a report submitted by the Collector in 1907, the average holding of a cultivator in Birbhūm has an area of 15 *bighās* and a rental of Rs. 22-8 per annum. In an ordinary year his land yields about 180 maunds of paddy, one-third of which goes to meet the cost of cultivation, including seed, the purchase of cattle, the wages of any labour that may be required for cultivation, as well as the rent due to the superior landlord. The remaining 120 maunds go to the support of himself and his family. He also gets about Rs. 50 per annum by the sale of *gur*, wheat, vegetables, etc.; and this amount he spends in purchasing cloth and other necessaries of life. Thus, in a normal year, the produce of his land is sufficient to carry him through without debt or difficulty. In many cases, however, he has to repay old

debts, and cultivates on credit till some crop is reaped, for whenever a social ceremony, such as *srāddha*, marriage, etc., takes place in the family, he has to go to the *mahājans* (money lenders), who generally charge high rates of interest. As social ceremonies are not of infrequent occurrence, and as the cultivator has few means to repay his debts, his lands sometimes pass into the hands of money-lenders. But, on the whole, the peasants of the district are well-to-do, and they have to contend more with the consequences of their insanitary surroundings, *e.g.*, malaria and cholera, than with actual want of the necessaries of life.

As regards the labouring classes, there is a large class of field labourers who are permanent servants of the cultivators, being employed by the year to cultivate the fields and receiving in return one-third of the produce. During the year before the crop ripens, these labourers live on advances of grain given by the cultivator, which are deducted with 25 per cent. interest from their share of the crop at harvest time. As they depend on the cultivators to advance what they require, few of them are free from debt. Being mostly low caste men, they are assisted by their women and children, and eke out their livelihood by other employments, for field labour only occupies them for seven to nine months. Non-agricultural labourers work chiefly at house-building, carrying goods and other miscellaneous odd jobs; they also work in the fields when there is an unusual demand for labour in cultivation. There are not many mendicants, and such as there are, are usually old people past work from age or disease, who are supported by charity.

CHAPTER VIII.

MINES, MANUFACTURES AND TRADE.

MINES. Iron. THE mineral products of the district are iron, coal, limestone, laterite, granite and sandstone. The iron ore of Bīrbhūm occurs in beds towards the base of the laterite deposits. The ore is not only abundant, but also contains a high percentage of iron, averaging over 40 per cent, and being occasionally nearly 60 per cent. It is not now worked, but formerly its extraction and manufacture constituted an industry of considerable importance. The first application to work the iron mines of Bīrbhūm by an improved system was made in 1774 by a native, Indra Nārāyan Sārmā, who offered terms to the Government through the Burdwān Council, which it was not likely he would ever have been able to fulfil, as they involved, after the fourth year of occupation, the payment of a rent of Rs. 5,000 per annum.* Though the offer was accepted, the lease was never taken up. In 1777, Messrs. Motte and Farquhar memoralized Government to be allowed the exclusive privilege of manufacturing iron in the Honourable Company's possessions in the country west of the meridian of Burdwān and of selling the produce free of duty. This was without prejudice to the rights of Messrs. Summer and Heatly, who had mining privileges in certain districts of Bīrbhūm and Pānchet. They claimed to be exempt from all interference by the members of the Burdwān Council and any of the Company's officers resident in the provinces included in the above-mentioned limits; all matters of dispute were to be referred to the Governor's Council, as the local officials, being traders in these districts, might be interested judges. The place first selected by them for the furnaces was, strangely enough, situated

* J.A. S. B., Vol. XII, p. 546.

in Jherriā in Pānchet, but the *Lohā Mahāls* of Bīrbhūm were to be made over to them on the existing terms and conditions. On their part they contracted to cast shot and shells, and to supply them at Fort William, at four-fifths of the average cost of the same when landed from Europe. They further contracted to pay to the Company one-twentieth of the profits of a lead mine (at Hisatu or Sidpa) in Rāmgarh, which they also proposed to work.

In the following year permission was granted to Mr. Farquhar to enter into possession. He then begged for an alteration in the terms, having in the meantime discovered that the ores of Bīrbhūm were better suited to his purpose than those of Jherriā. This was granted, but a series of troubles awaited him from the opposition of the *jāgīrdārs* and Rājā. In 1779, after further correspondence, an advance of Rs. 15,000 was made by Government to Mr. Farquhar, in order to enable him to complete his furnaces, etc., and he carried on from that time to 1789, with what result, as regards the manufacture of iron, is not known; but the records are full of accounts of disputes and contests with the natives, who actually claimed that the revenue from the *Lohā Mahāls* belonged to them, though Government had received it before Farquhar obtained the lease. In 1789 he relinquished the speculation and was appointed to the gunpowder manufactory at Faltā, but he retained the lease of the *Lohā Mahāls* till 1795, after which they lapsed to the zamīndār, who disposed of parts of the estate. The new proprietors commenced to levy dues on the iron mines within their lots, and as a matter of course litigation ensued. Finally the Court (Sadar Dīwāni) issued rules which established and defined the rights of the holder of the *Lohā Mahāls*, who had purchased them as a separate lot at the ultimate sale of the zamīndāri. It would seem, therefore, that the Government had allowed the mining rights, their claim to which they had distinctly asserted when leasing the mines to Farquhar, to slip through their fingers. It is stated that Bīrbhūm hook iron, during the period of Farquhar's labours, was sold in Calcutta at Rs. 5 per maund, Balasore at Rs. 6-8, and English at from Rs. 10 to Rs. 11. In all probability this iron was produced by the direct native process, not by European methods. The above is taken from one of a series of "Contributions towards a History of the Development of the Mineral Resources of India, by S. G. T. Heatly."*

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* J. A. S. B., Vol. XII, 1843, p. 542.

† *Op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, p. 754.

In 1845, Mr. Welby Jackson* published a short account of the Bīrbhūm iron works as they were then carried on by natives. There were about thirty furnaces which, he says, produced, at a cost of Rs. 17, about 25 maunds of iron at each smelting, which lasted for four days and nights. He alludes to the work as gradually destroying all the fuel in the vicinity. The farmer of the *Lohā Mahāls* claimed one rupee for each smelting and 6 pice on each maund of refined iron. Mr. Jackson enquired into the monopoly, which struck him as curious, and was told that it came about as has been above described. He left the district before he had fully enquired into the matter, but he states that he doubted the right claimed and could not conceive how it had originated. He was not apparently aware of the full facts of the case, viz., that a predecessor of his had sold on behalf of the Rājā's estate what was really Government property.

In 1852 Dr. Oldham reported on the iron ores of Bīrbhūm and the Dāmodar valley. His attention had been especially directed by the Court of Directors to the question of iron manufacture in connection with the introduction of railways into India. In this paper there is the first description of the nature and mode of occurrence of the ore, which is described as consisting of partly earthy and partly magnetic oxides of iron, which occur disseminated among and spreading in an entangled manner through soapy trappean claystone, its origin being due to infiltration into cracks and joints. The bed or layer impregnated was stated to be 5 feet thick. Altogether Dr. Oldham's opinion as to the avilable amount of ore was that the supply was not so great as subsequent investigations have shown it to be. Native furnaces, on the large scale which seems to have distinguished those of Bīrbhūm from those found elsewhere in India, were in operation at four centres, viz., Ballia, Nārāyanpur, Deochā, Dhamrā and Gānpur. At Deochā there were thirty furnaces for the reduction of ore; these were worked by Muhammadans, the refiners being Hindus. The estimated average outturn from each furnace in the year was 34 tons of iron, and as there were believed to be in all seventy furnaces, the total outturn of *kachchā* iron was estimated at 2,380 tons in the year. In these furnaces the *kachchā* iron, unlike that produced in other parts of India, formed at the bottom of the furnace in a molten condition, and resembled good pig-iron. The refining was really a sort of puddling process, which induced a pasty condition admitting of

* *Vide* Engineers' Journal, Calcutta, Vol. III, p. 112.

the iron being drawn out and hammered until it became thoroughly malleable.* Ten maunds of the *kachchā* iron were said to yield seven maunds and ten seers of the *pakkā*, from which the outturn of refined iron was deduced to be, in round numbers, 1,700 tons, at a cost of £4-4-0 per ton. To prepare this in marketable shape as bars, etc., would require, according to Dr. Oldham's estimate, an additional expenditure of 50 per cent., the final result being that at £6-6-0 it could not compete with English iron at the prices then prevailing in Calcutta, though, being a charcoal iron, its softness made it better suited for some purposes than English iron. In view of the daily increasing difficulty about fuel, Dr. Oldham finally concluded that the absence of economical fuel and the scanty supply of ore determined the inapplicability of any extended series of operations for smelting and manufacturing iron in the district of Bīrbhūm.*

About 1855 Messrs. Mackey and Company of Calcutta started the Bīrbhūm Iron Works Company, and established iron works in Bīrbhūm, fixing on Muhammadbazar as a site for their factories and furnaces. The works were carried on at a loss for several years, were closed and re-opened, the several attempts to establish the manufacture on a profitable footing proving abortive. The employment thus afforded to the indigenous iron-smelters, coupled with the infliction of a heavy royalty, all tended to break up the native industry, and in 1870 there was but one of their large furnaces in operation in Deochā. Subsequently, in 1872, when the native landlord, to whom Mr. Mackey's works at Muhammadbazar lapsed, attempted to re-open them again, this last furnace was closed; and with it the most complete indigenous system of iron manufacture ever practised in Bengal was for the time put a stop to.† In 1875 Mr. Hughes of the Geological Survey reported favourably on the prospect of iron manufacture in Bīrbhūm, and shortly afterwards Messrs. Burn and Co. commenced operations; but after some months' trial it was found that the prospect of enlarging the works did not promise to be a profitable speculation, and thus ceased the last of the many attempts to manufacture iron which have been made in this area.

Professor Ball sums up the history of the industry as follows :— "The history of the attempts which have been made to establish

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* The above account is reproduced from Professor V. Ball's Economic Geology of India (1881), pp. 362-65.

† Geology of the Rājmahāl *Hills*, Memoirs Geological Survey of India, XIII, 88.

iron-mining on the European system in the district of Bīrbhūm is a long one dating back so far as the year 1777. It fully supports the truth of the old adage that history repeats itself. The same sanguine hopes, the same attempts to carry on work in spite of discouraging circumstances, the same failures and the final loss of expended capital, are recorded in the accounts of each attempt."*

Coal. Coal was discovered a few years ago at a place called Arang, about 28 miles from Surī, on the banks of the river Ajai in the western extremity of thāna Dubrājpur. The colliery, which was opened in 1901, has one pit, 75 feet deep. The output in 1908 was 1,100 tons, and the total number of labourers employed averaged 5,940 per diem.

Quarries. There are some stone quarries on the western border of thānas Rāmpur Hāt and Nalhāti, from which a small quantity of stone is taken and exported for use as ballast on railway lines. Stone is also found at Dubrājpur and Bakreswar, but is not worked. Lime is produced from *ghuting* or nodular limestone, which is found in abundance in the district.

MANUFACTURES. The manufactures of the district are not of much economic importance, but some, such as the silk spinning and weaving industry at and round Ganutiā and the lac manufacture of Ilāmbazar, are of historic interest, having been started by the early pioneers of English trade. Other old industries, such as the manufacture of indigo, have died out.

Silk weaving. The manufacture of silk, though affecting a very small part of the district, viz., a fringe 3 or 4 miles broad on its eastern boundary, from the Mor on the south to the railway on the north, is the principal industry of Bīrbhūm. Here mulberry cocoon rearing and spinning are carried on, the silk factory of Ganutiā, which belongs to the Bengal Silk Company, being the centre of these industries; while the principal villages where mulberry silk weaving is carried on are Baswa, Bishnupur and Margrām, also within the jurisdiction of the Rāmpur Hāt thāna. The silk weaving industry is of less magnitude and importance than the silk spinning industry, but the Baswa-Bishnupur silks have more than a local repute.

Cocoon-rearing. Three varieties of mulberry silkworms are reared, viz.,—(1) the *nistari*, (2) the *chhota-palu* or *deshi*, and (3) the *bara-palu*, which is an annual variety, the egg stage continuing for 10 months instead of 8 to 16 days as in the case of *chhota-palu*

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* Economic Geology of India (1881), p. 362.

and *nistari* varieties. The *bara-palu* produces a select class of beautiful cocoons, yielding a yarn which is in much demand among the best weavers: what is called *dhali* (white) silk is made out of thread spun from white *bara-palu* cocoons. The *bara-palu* silk goes almost entirely to feed the native looms, and at present there is no demand for it in the European factories. The *chhota-palu* ranks next as regards the quantity of the silk it produced, but the fibre of the *nistari* silkworm is finer and softer. On the other hand, the *nistari* cocoons yield a smaller proportion of silk. There are, as a rule, three crops of *nistari* and one of *chhota-palu* in the year, while the *bara-palu*, which is reared in the spring, forms the greater part of the March crop or *band*. The Aswin (September) crop of *chhota-palu* cocoons is of considerable importance, seeds being taken from it to other districts for the early November crop. The district is in fact a recognized seed-rearing centre (*joar*), known as the Rārh Joar, to which cocoon rearers resort for the purchase of good seed.

Two kinds of mulberry are grown, viz., the *bara tunt* and the *chhota tunt*, which are also known as *kajli* and *pheti* respectively. They may be distinguished by their leaves and by the kind of soil on which they are grown. The *chhota tunt* has palmate leaves and grows on sandy soils. The *bara tunt* has lanceolated leaves, which are also thicker and slightly rougher than those of the *chhota tunt*, and it grows on stony soil. There is this further distinction that the *bara tunt* is more suitable for the *bara-palu*, and the *chhota tunt* for the *chhota-palu* silkworm; while the *nistari* silkworm is reared indifferently on both. The mulberry most commonly found in Bīrbhum is the *chhota tunt*. It is planted in raised fields, banked and ditched all round, which are plentifully manured with cow-house litter, mud from the buttom of tanks, and the chrysalides of reeled-off cocoons. The best land for it is fresh alluvion, which does not require manuring for two or three years. The cocoons are either (1) taken to the nearest *hāt* for sale, or (2) killed by exposure in thin layers to the sun and reserved for sale until the *paikars* or agents of the European filatures come round, or (3) steamed in a basket covered over with cloth, under which a pot of water is kept boiling, and reeled off into silk, or (4) if they are formed in a very healthy manner, are bought up by travelling rearers, who go from village to village, and sometimes from *joar* to *joar* in quest of seed. In this district, however, the cocoon-rearers themselves generally spin the silk into thread by the native method of reeling. The silk is called *khamru*,

and it is estimated that about 500 maunds per annum are produced.

Filatures. Raw silk of a better quality is spun in filatures, of which the most important is that at Ganutiā, on the north bank of the Mor, where the present factory was established in the 18th century by Mr. Frushard, under a contract for the supply of silk to the East India Company. It is owned by a large firm, the Bengal Silk Company in Calcutta, and is under European management. At Bhadrapur in the north, 3 miles south of Nawādā station (Lohāpur) on the branch railway from Nalhāti to Azīmganj, is another filature owned by the same company, with an outwork at Kaytha, both under native management. These filatures all use steam for damping the cocoons, heating the water in which they float during reeling, and drying the silk. The surrounding country used to be dotted with numerous filatures, but all of those situated in the Bīrbhūm district are either in ruins or unworked.

In addition to the filatures, there are numerous hand spindles in the houses of the villagers in the mulberry tract, especially in Baswa and Bishnupur in the Rāmpur Hāt thāna, and Palsā in thāna Murarai. The fabrics turned out are generally plain piece-goods, the variety most commonly made by the weavers when working on their own account being *kora*. This is an inferior silk, thin and rough, not glossy and soft like ordinary silk, but stiff and hard like cotton stuff. When, however, they work on commission for the European firms of Berhampore, and are supplied with well spun silk, the Bishnupur weavers are capable of turning out high class fabrics. When this is done, the silk dealers make cash advances to them for the purchase of the raw silk, undertaking to purchase the fabric when finished at the market price of the day. The products, which generally consist of *dhotis*, *sāris*, with printed and plain borders, pieces (*thāns*), 10 yards and 7 yards long, and handkerchiefs, are sold locally, and sometimes exported to other parts of the province through agents. *Thāns* are sold at 12 annas to Re. 1-8 per yard, *dhotis* with ordinary borders at Rs. 6 to Rs. 10, *sāris* at Rs. 8 to Rs. 15, and handkerchiefs at Rs. 3 to Rs. 6 per dozen.

Tusser weaving. Besides silk weaving as described above, tusser weaving is carried on in many villages of the district, the most important of which are Bīrsinghpur, Kālīpur, Karidha, Ilāmbazar and Tāntipārā. A few cocoons are brought in from the western jungles, where they are either reared by the aboriginal or semi-aboriginal tribes or gathered from the forest trees. The quantity of cocoons gathered or reared in this district is, however,

not sufficient to meet the demand, and the weavers therefore get their supply from the Santāl Parganas and Singhbhūm. The cocoons, having passed into the weavers' hands, are reeled and woven into *dhotis*, *sārīs* and *thāns*, 10 yards in length, which are coloured if required. *Dhotis* sell at Rs. 3 to Rs. 6, and *sāris* at Rs. 4 to Rs. 8; while *thāns* of ordinary tusser sell at Rs. 7-8 to Rs. 10 and *pakwan* thread at Rs. 12 to Rs. 18. These cloths are sold locally and exported to other parts of Bengal. It is reported that in 1907-08 the total quantity of tusser fabrics manufactured was 110 maunds, giving employment, on the average, to 1,800 persons daily.

Lac manufacture. Lac manufacture is an industry confined to the village of Ilāmbazar. The stick lac is brought in from the western jungles by low castes or semi-aboriginal tribes. In this form it consists of small twigs surrounded by cylinders of translucent orange-yellow gum, in which the insects are imbedded; the best lac is said to be obtained from twigs of the *kusum* tree, and it is also produced on the *sāl*, *pālas* and *pākur* trees. The raw material, when brought in, is separated from the twigs and ground into small particles, which are placed in large earthen jars and allowed to soak in water for about 24 hours. It is then well rubbed by the hand till the colouring matter has been thoroughly extracted. This consists of the dead bodies of the insects (*Coccus lacca*) buried in the gum. These, when the fluid is allowed to stand in large vats, gradually precipitate themselves to the bottom. The water is drained off, and the sediment, after being strained, pressed and dried, becomes lac-dye ready for the market. This is used for preparing the cotton, called *altā*, which is used by Hindu females. The gummy exudation of the insect, in the meantime, is carefully dried in the sun, placed in long bags, and melted over a strong fire. It is then squeezed out, either in thin sheets upon an earthen cylinder, when it becomes shellac, or in dabs upon a plantain stalk, when it is known as button lac. Leaf lac is no longer made at Ilāmbazar, and the trade is confined to button lac.

Erskine & Co., and subsequently Messrs. Farquharson and Campbell & Co., had a large shellac and lac-dye factory at Ilāmbazar, but this was transferred in the year 1882 to native hands. The industry is now carried on at several small factories in Ilāmbazar and its neighbourhood, where the artisans turn out a number of lacquered articles, *e.g.*, bracelets, ink-pots, rulers, cups, pots and toys, such as imitations of fruits, flowers and animals, which are said to be of good design and workmanship. The industry is carried on by a class of men called Nuris.

Cotton weaving.

Cotton weaving has declined for many years past owing to the import of cheaper machine-made cloth, but has recently revived as a result of the *swadeshi* movement. Coarse cotton cloths are now woven in many villages, which find a sale among the cultivating and labouring classes. Finer cloths, such as twills, table cloths, *pardāhs*, bed sheets, and cloth for coats and shirts, are made at Bolpur, Dubrājpur, Karidha, Tāntipārā and Alunda.

Sugar manufacture.

The manufacture of molasses is a village handicraft, and sugar is refined, according to native methods, at Kukutia in thāna Dubrājpur, a village which has long supplied the needs of Brāhmans and devotees, and in which the use of foreign sugar has been abandoned. The quantity of sugar produced at Kukutia in 1907-08 is reported to have been 2,500 maunds.

Brass and bell-metal.

Brass and bell-metal wares of an ordinary description are made in many villages, but the braziers of Dubrājpur and Nalhāti turn out articles of a better finish, which find a ready sale outside the district. The brass utensils and pots of Ilāmbazar, Tikarbetha and Hazratpur are also said to be of a superior quality.

One class of brass-ware has more than a local reputation, viz, what are known as *pais* or Suri bowls. These are really rice measures made of wood, bound and ornamented with brass, which gives them a handsome appearance. The bowls are manufactured at Lakshmipur (generally known as Lokpur), a village in thāna Khairāsol about 6 miles south of Rājnagar. They are made to order, and there is a considerable demand for them among Europeans, but as there is only one man who makes them, they are not readily obtainable. They are of various sizes, from 10 seers down to 1 chittack, and are made in sets. A set of eight bowls from 10 seers to 1 chittack costs Rs. 46; a set of seven bowls from 5 seers to 1 chittack costs Rs. 31; a set from 2½ seers downwards (six bowls) cost Rs. 19; and a set from 1 seer downwards (five bowls) costs Rs. 11. The general public use bowls of 1 seer and less for domestic purposes.

Iron-work.

Iron-work is carried on in almost every village of the district by the local blacksmiths, who make the agricultural implements in common use. At Dubrājpur, Kharun, Lokpur, Rājnagar and Rāmpur Hāt iron articles of a better class, such as knives, scissors, padlocks, swords, axes, daggers, cooking and other utensils, are produced and sold locally. The nut-crackers of Dubrājpur are well known in the district.

Indigo manufacture.

Indigo manufacture used to be an important industry in Bīrbhūm, the centres of the industry being Ilāmbazar and Supur, where there were large factories. It was first introduced into the district about 1795 by Mr. John Cheap, the Company's Commercial

Resident, and was carried on by Mr. David Erskine, who established a factory at Doranda, 6 miles west of Surul, and subsequently at Ilāmbazar. He started the firm of Erskine & Co., which also opened several collieries. It only ceased to exist in 1882, and in 1872 possessed eight factories in Bīrbhūm and ten beyond the district boundary. The factory at Supur was closed in 1887 after working for a century, and there are now no factories in the district.

Other industries.

The other industries of the district, such as pottery manufacture, basket and mat-making, shoe-making, etc., are merely village handicrafts which call for no description: the pottery of Rājnagar has a local reputation. Conch-shell ornaments are made in some villages, and the Sānkhāris of Karidha are said to have attained a high degree of skill in making them.

TRADE.

The chief export of the district is rice, which is despatched by rail both up and down the line. The other exports, such as lac, silk, and oil-seeds, find their way mostly to the Calcutta market. The principal imports are salt, cotton, cotton cloth, pulses, tobacco, wheat, coal, kerosene oil, and gunny-bags. The district trade is carried on by permanent markets in the towns and large villages, and to some extent by means of fairs. The principal trading villages and seats of commerce are Dubrājpur, Surī, Bolpur, Sainthiā, Purandarpur, Ahmadpur, Fatehpur, Rāmpur Hāt, Margrām, Nalhāti and Murarai. Ilāmbazar, Kirnahar and Muhammadbazar were also formerly markets of some importance, but their trade has declined. Surī, the head-quarters town of the district, is unimportant from a commercial point of view.

A curious trade in live fish is carried on between the Bhāgīrathi and the inland villages of this district. The fry are caught in the river and put in *gharās* or pots of water, which are carried by coolies "bhangy" fashion, *i.e.*, a pot hangs from each end of a piece of split bamboo, four or five feet long, which is carried over the shoulder. The coolies come by rail to the nearest stations and thence carry the fish round for sale through the villages, where they are put into tanks. Throughout the journey the water in the *gharās* has to be kept in motion, or the fish die. The carriers, when not walking, are therefore compelled to impart to the *gharās* a continual jerky motion up and down. It is a quaint sight to see 40 or 50 of these coolies on the platform waiting for a train. They stand on their toes and keep up a rapid, rhythmical and unintermittent shrugging of the shoulders, and twitching of the ankles and knees, which, with the springing-up of the bamboo and the weight of the *gharās*, keeps the water regularly shaken up and down.

Weights and measures.

The following tables show the weights and measures in use in different parts of the district in addition to the standard seer of 80 *tolās* :—

SUBDIVISION.	Name of weight.	Equivalent number of tolās.	Area.	Used for—
Surī ...	*Kachha* seer ...	$58\frac{10}{16}$ ...	In general use.	All kinds of goods.
	Batkari ..	60 ..	Surī ...	......
		58 ...	Bolpur ...	Rice and salt.
		72 ...	Ilāmbazar	Molasses.
		80 ...	Sākulipur ...	Oil-cakes, etc.
	Pai	110 ...	Rājnagar ...	Rice and pulses.
		75 ...	Sākulipur ...	......
		80	......	Mustard seed.
Rāmpur Hāt ...	*Kachha* seer ...	$58\frac{10}{16}$ ...	In general use.	All kinds of goods.
	Tul	$58\frac{10}{16}$ ...	*id* ...	Fish and vegetables.
		MEASURES OF CAPACITY.		
Surī	Seer	1 quart or $58\frac{10}{16}$ *tolās*.	In general use.	Rice, oil-seeds, milk and *ghī*.
	Pai	$\frac{1}{2}$ quart or $29\frac{5}{8}$ *tolās*.	*id* ...	......
	Bamboo *chunga*	70 *tolās* ...	*id* ...	......
	Ari	10 seers ...	*id* ...	Paddy.
Rāmpur Hāt ...	Seer	$58\frac{10}{16}$ *tolās* ...	*id* ...	Rice, milk, etc.
	Pai	$29\frac{5}{8}$ *tolās* ...	*id* ...	......
	Bamboo *chunga*	73 *tolās* ...	*id* ...	Paddy.
	Ari	$7\frac{1}{2}$ seers or $58\frac{10}{16}$ *tolās*.	*id* ...	*id.*

CHAPTER IX.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

THE first map showing roads in the tract of country now forming the district of Bīrbhūm is Valentyn's Map of Bengal, which was compiled from notes left by Van den Broucke, the Dutch Governor of Chinsura from 1658-64. In this map "Baccaresoor" is entered with one road running south-east to Burdwān and another running north-east to Cossimbazar. The map, however, does not show the old Badshāhi road, which is known to have been in existence at least as early as 1516 A.D. The Bādshāhi road can still be traced in the Jangipur-Burdwān road, which runs for some distance along the eastern border of the district. To the north there is a short length close to the eastern boundary of the Nalhāti thāna, and in the south it passes for some miles along the eastern boundary of the Sākulipur thāna, from which it proceeds to Mangalkot and thence to Burdwān. DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS.

At the beginning of the 19th century there were but few roads in the district, and these few had been made by the Commercial Resident, Mr. Cheap, for the transport of goods to and from his factory at Surul, *e.g.*, the roads from Surul to Ganutiā and to Kātwā in Burdwān. The only road passable throughout the year for carts was the road from Surī to Burdwān through Surul. A road to Murshidābād had been completed in 1796, but this was without bridges and drains. A road to Kātwā and another to Deoghar were repaired at times by the convicts, but the number of the latter was insufficient to keep them in good condition. The zamīndārs were bound by their engagements at the time of settlement to pay attention to the roads in their estates, and they are said to have kept them "in a passable state of repair" when ordered to do so by the Magistrate. "Some", wrote the Magistrate in 1818, "even planted roadside trees."*

The Loop Line of the East Indian Railway was opened as far as the Ajai river in October 1858, and was extended through

* E. G. Drake-Brockman's *Notes on the Early Administration of Birbhum*, p. 3.

the district in the following year. In 1862 a private company constructed a branch line, known as the Nalhāti State Railway, from Nalhāti to Azīmganj, which was acquired by Government 10 years later. Within the present century the length of railway line in the district has been further increased by the construction of a branch line from Sainthiā to Ondāl.

The district is now well provided with means of communications, for the Loop line bisects it from south to north, in the south-west the Sainthiā-Ondal line connects it with the Chord line, and in the north-east the branch line running due east to Azīmganj serves a broad tract of country in the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision. There are no canals, and the rivers, being torrents in the rains and nearly or entirely dry for the rest of the year, are practically useless for transport. On the other hand, there is a well-planned, and in the Surī subdivision well-executed, network of roads, which compensates for the absence of waterways.

RAILWAYS. The Loop line enters the district from Burdwān by a bridge across the Ajai river, which has a length of 2,200 feet and consists of 30 masonry arches of 50 feet span. It passes through the heart of the district for some 65 miles and leaves it at the Rājgāon station, which is situated on the border of the Santāl Parganas to the north. Proceeding from south to north, the stations on this line and their distance from Calcutta are:—Bolpur (99 miles), Ahmadpur (111), Sainthiā (119), Mallārpur (129), Rāmpur Hāt (136), Nalhāti (145), Chattra (150), Murarai (155) and Rājgāon (162 miles).

Nalhāti is a junction for a branch line running due east to Azīmganj in the Murshidābād district, which has two stations in Bīrbhūm, viz., Takipur and Lohāpur (formerly known as Nawādā). This railway was constructed in 1862 by a private company, but as a private speculation it proved a failure, and it was acquired by Government in 1872. The total length of the line is $27\frac{1}{4}$ miles.

The Ondāl-Sainthiā line connects Surī with the Chord line at Ondāl on the one side and the Loop line at Sainthiā on the other side. It enters the district from Burdwān, by a bridge over the Ajai near Pandaveswar, which is a railway station just on the south bank of that river. The stations within the district are, proceeding from south to north, Panchrā, Dubrājpur, Chinpai, Surī and Konri. The Ondāl-Sainthiā-Azīmganj trains run from Ondāl to Azīmganj and *vice versâ*; and some of the trains run between Asansol and Azīmganj.

ROADS. The District Board maintains 182 miles of metalled roads, 303 miles of unmetalled roads, and 172 miles of village roads,

which are merely fair weather tracks. The most important of these roads are shown in the following table :—

From	To	Length, miles.	Inspection bungalows.	Unbridged rivers.
Surī ...	Sainthiā ...	10½	Sainthiā ...	......
" ...	District boundary on west (towards Dumka).	8½	Surī ...	......
" ...	Kalgrām ...	31¼	Ahmadpur (13th mile). Laghātā (22nd mile).	Kopi (22nd mile).
" ...	Rājnagar ...	14½	Rājnagar ...	......
" ...	Muhammad-bazar.	7½	......	Mor (3rd mile).
" ...	Ajai river ...	20½	Dubrājpur (14th mile).	Bakreswar (10th mile). Sāl (16th mile) Hinglā (19th mile).
Bolpur ...	Ilāmbazar ...	13	Bolpur Ilāmbazar.	......
" ...	Bengchatra ...	10	......	......
" ...	Sākulipur ...	12	Sākulipur ...	......
Dubrājpur	Ilāmbazar ...	16	......	Sāl (13th mile).
Nalhāti ...	Nawādā ...	11	Nalhāti ...	......
Sainthiā ...	Mahesha ...	11	Sainthiā ...	Mor (2nd mile).
Purandarpur	Ajai river ...	18	......	Bakreswar. Kopi.
Muhammad-bazar.	Mallārpur ...	13	Mallārpur ...	Dwārkā (8th mile). Kulay (12th mile).
Surul ...	Ganutiā ...	19¾*	......	Koi (15th mile).
Dubrājpur...	Chandrapur *viâ* Bakreswar.	11½	......	Bakreswar (8th mile).

* The first three miles are not maintained, and there is no trace of the road for this distance.

The Surī-Sainthiā road and the Sāinthiā-Mahesha road are parts of the old road to Murshidābād, which is known to have been in existence at the end of the 18th century. The second road is part of the road from Bhāgalpur to Surī (103 miles long), which is commonly known as the Dumkā road. The Surī-Rājnagar road is another old road, having been formerly the high road from Surī to Deoghar, which was also in existence at the end of the 18th century. The Nalhāti-Nawādā road forms part of the embankment of which the other part is occupied by the Nalhāti branch railway. The road from Purandarpur is part of the old road from Surī to Burdwān *viâ* Surul, and dates back over 100 years, while the Surul-Ganutiā road is that made by Mr. Cheap when Commercial Resident at Surul.

WATER COMMUNICATION. The only navigable rivers are the Mor and the Ajai, and there is practically no river-borne traffic. There are nine ferries,

of which the most important are the Tilpārā Ghāt ferry across the Mor, the Laghātā ferry across the Koi, and the Ilāmbazar Ghāt ferry across the Ajai. The ferries ply only during the rains when the rivers are in flood, passengers and goods being transported in ordinary country boats. For crossing small streams floats resting on inverted water-pots or the hollowed-out trunks of palm trees are used.

CONVEYANCES. Other conveyances in common use are bullock-carts, carriages and *pālkis*. Carriages used to ply regularly between Surī and Sainthiā, but the business is on the decline since the introduction of the Ondāl-Sainthiā railway.

POSTAL DEPARTMENT. There are 68 post offices in the district and 290 miles of postal communication. The number of postal articles delivered in 1908-09 was 2,017,964, including 623,350 letters, 1,114,858 post-cards, 82,472 packets, 145,574 newspapers and 21,710 parcels. The value of money-orders issued was Rs. 11,02,157, and of those paid Rs. 5,98,539, while there were 3,292 Savings Bank deposits, the amount deposited being Rs. 1,64,088. There are postal telegraph offices at Surī, Bolpur, Hetampur Rājbāti, Murarai, Nalhāti, Rāmpur Hāt and Sainthiā.

CHAPTER X.

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION.

THE district was formerly held as a military fief by the Pathān Rājās of Bīrbhūm, to whom it had been granted as a means of guarding the frontier of Bengal against the incursions of the hill tribes of Chotā Nāgpur. The Rājās had under them a standing militia composed of a warlike Muhammadan peasantry, who held allotments of land in return for their services. "This district," wrote Mr. J. Grant, Chief Sarishtādār of Bengal in 1786, "was held by a tenure different to any other known in the country. In some respects it corresponded with the ancient military fiefs of Europe, inasmuch as certain lands were held *lākhirāj* or exempted from the payment of rent, and solely appropriated for the maintenance of troops." Elsewhere he writes:—"Bīrbhūm, with all its ascertained dimensions from the year 1760, contains, according to Rennell, 3,858 British square miles, and is the fourth in magnitude of all the single zamīndāris of Bengal, being, next to Burdwān, in superficial measure the most extensive. Of this area, near two-thirds (comprising all the lands among the hills west of Nagar, the capital, and still in great part jungly, uncultivated, or little known) were assigned over for the maintenance of some thousands of *barkandāzes*, matchlock-men or native Hindustāni militia appointed to guard the frontiers; while the remaining portion of the territory was alone productive to the State of yearly revenue rated at Rs. 3,77,645. The zamīndār, a Musalmān of the warlike and proverbially treacherous Pathān race, soon found out the importance of the station in which he was placed to favour princely independence, when the distractions of the Mughal empire, or feeble divided administrations of usurping *Subahdārs*, awakened the dormant passion of unlawful ambition."

REVENUE HISTORY.

Mr. Grant then mentions that after the death of Murshid Kulī Khān, the Rājā, at the head of a formidable body of feudatories, 'in a frontier province of great extent, unexplored and difficult of access, subject only to the weak control of a delegate' found it an easy task to throw off his allegiance and

assert his independence. "The consequent loss of revenue, however, was less felt than the political disadvantage of dismemberment of a territory which commanded all the leading passes direct from bordering foreign independent countries, when, in the government of Alī Vardi, the Marāthās found their way into Bengal through this district, by the treacherous connivance of the refractory zamīndār. Its re-annexation became, therefore, an object of the first importance immediately after the conclusion of the war, and under so vigorous an administration was soon partially accomplished, with an increase of Rs. 68,223 on account of the *abwābs* (*khāsnavisi* and *chaut*) in addition to the ancient established *jamā*. But the complete reduction of the rebellious superintending farmer, who in the period of his independence had grievously oppressed, by means of his foreign Musalmān soldiers, the native inoffensive Hindus composing the body of peasantry and manufacturers, was reserved for the *Subahdāri* of Kāsim Alī."

This measure was effected in 1760, when the privilege of holding such an extensive area revenue-free was resumed, "having been found entirely subversive of the sovereign authority under preceding Musalmān administrations, and inconsistent with present exigencies, or a more vigorous intelligent system of government, which required the sword to be kept unparticipated in the hands of the ruling power." The *lākhirāj* tracts, when brought under assessment, produced a very considerable accession of revenue to the *Subahdāri*, or Government treasury, under the name of *kifāyat* or profit; and the total assessment of the territory held by the Rājā of Bīrbhūm was Rs. 8,96,275, besides *abwābs* of Rs. 68,223 and *taufir* of Rs. 6,508—in all, Rs. 9,71,006 instead of Rs. 4,45,867 as before.* It must be remembered, however, that the Rājā's territory extended over no less than 3,858 square miles and comprised a large area outside the present district, viz., the whole of the Deoghar subdivision and other parts of the Santāl Parganas.

In 1765, the year of the cession of the Dīwāni to the East India Company, the revenue due from the Rājā for the entire zamīndāri was 8 lakhs, though, according to Mr. Grant, there was reason to believe that 13 lakhs were collected then and some years afterwards. The famine of 1770, however, impoverished the Rājā, for a large proportion of the land went out of cultivation and rents could with difficulty be collected for the remainder.

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* Analysis of the Finance of Bengal, Fifth Report (Madras reprint, 1883), pp. 262, 294-5, 320, 321, 407-9.

In spite of this, the revenue demand was steadily increased every year, though every year the actual amount paid was only half or a little more of the demand. The Rājā pleaded that the revenue agents (*āmils*) could not possibly collect the revenue from the impoverished ryots, and at each new assessment they were superseded and imprisoned in the debtors' prisons for arrears. His plea was not believed, Mr. Grant, for example, pointing out (in 1786) that though only Rs. 5,31,321 were collected, the *mālguzāri* fund was returned at Rs. 11,44,825. He admitted that Rs. 4,11,613 were deducted on account of *palātikā* or deserted lands, but thought that this was due to fallow land being classed as uncultivable waste. In 1781 the payment of revenue had risen to 4½ lakhs, but he said that in 1783 and onwards there had been an annual defalcation of upwards of 8 lakhs. Finally, in 1786, the Rājā himself, Bahādur Zamān Khān, was imprisoned as a defaulter and his property attached.* Next year the Collector, Mr. Sherburne, made, as best as he could, an enquiry into the assets of the estate, and in accordance with his recommendation the revenue for 1788 was fixed at Rs. 6,11,321. The Rājā was at the same time allowed to return and resume the management of his estate, on condition that he did not interfere with the renters and ryots, for many of the latter had fled from the district in consequence of his exactions.†

The difficulties of revenue administration in these early days of British rule may be gathered from the remarks of Mr. Sherburne—"It has become an almost annual custom for the ryots, headed and excited by the *mandals*, to assemble in arms and put a stop to the collections till they brought the farmer to terms. The revenue can never be realized without the presence of a military force to check these disturbances." Further evidence on this point is given by Mr. Shore, who in his famous Minute of June 1789 regarding the Permanent Settlement wrote :—

"In almost every village, according to its extent, there is one or more head ryot, known by a variety of names in different parts of the country, who has, in some measure, the direction and superintendence of the rest. For distinction, I shall confine myself to the term Mandal; he assists in fixing the rent, in directing the cultivation, and in making the collections. This class of men, so apparently useful, seem greatly to have contributed to

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* Fifth Report, pp. 408-9; Bengal M.S. Records (1894), pp. 91, 133 (letter No. 1187); Annals of Rural Bengal, pp. 63, 64.

† E. G. Drake-Brockman, *Notes on the Early Administration of Bīrbhūm*, pp. 4, 9, 10.

the growth of the various abuses now existing, and to have secured their own advantages, both at the expense of the zamīndār, landlord, renter and inferior ryots. Their power and influence over the inferior ryots is great and extensive; they compromise with the farmer at their expense, and procure their own rents to be lowered without any diminution in what he is to receive, by throwing the difference upon the lower ryots, from whom it is exacted by taxes of various denominations. They make a traffic in *pattas*, lowering the rates of them by private stipulations, and connive at the separation and secretion of lands. If any attempt is made to check the abuses, they urge the ryots to complain and sometimes to resist. In Bīrbhūm a striking instance of this has been exhibited; when an attempt was made to equalize the assessment of the ryots by moving the burthen from the lower class, and resuming the illegal profits of the Mandals, an immediate oppisition was made and the complainants came to Calcutta. The Government was obliged to interfere with a military force to anticipate disturbances; and at present the ryots are apparently averse to an arrangement proposed for their benefit, and upon principles calculated to ensure it. On a former occasion, when a general measurement was attempted by the zāmindār of the same district as a basis of a general and equal assessment, the Mandals, by a contribution, prevailed upon him to forego it."*

Another difficulty in the way of proper administration was the practice of granting land as *bāze zamīn*, *i.e.*, revenue-free, so as to exclude it from assessment. According to Mr. Grant, 108,771 *bighās* were entered as *bāze zamīn*, while 127,117 more *bighās* were *chākrān* lands, assigned for the maintenance of 9,784 *thānādārs* or militia men.† In the next 13 years still more land was alienated in this way, for in 1789 there were 217,907 *bighās* of *bāze zamīn*, though only 22,919 *bighās* were registered as such.‡

At the decennial settlement of 1790 Government, accepting the recommendation of the then Collector, Mr. Keating, fixed the revenue at 6½ lakhs, subject only to a deduction for the abolished *sair* duties; and this settlement became permanent in 1793. Muhammad Zamān Khān, who succeeded his father in January 1790,§ proved unequal to the strain of collecting rents punctually and as punctually paying a fixed revenue. He became

* Fifth Report (1883), p. 142.
† Id. p. 409.
‡ E. G. Drake-Brockman, *The Early Administration of Birbhūm*, p. 5.
§ Bengal M.S. Records, p. 167 (letter No. 1539).

so heavily involved, that the Collector reported there was little chance of recovering the arrears except by the sale of his lands. The estate was constantly under attachment, and the Rājā himself put in confinement more than once to compel payment of the arrears, but without success.* In 1795 we find that half the arrears of revenue in the whole of Bengal were due from him and the zamīndār of Rājshāhi. "This failure in their payments", wrote Government in 1795, "has originated in causes wholly foreign to the administration of justice; the former having dissipated, the public revenue in the most profligate extravagance and debauchery, for which, and at the instance of his own family, process has been instituted to bring him under the regulations of disqualified landlords."† Accordingly a charge of disqualification was made by the Collector under Regulation X of 1793 and instituted before the Judge against the Rājā, whose "want of means had resulted from his own neglect and profligacy." Both he and the Rānī were declared to have collected their rents, but, instead of fulfilling their engagements to Government, spent them in idleness, folly, and extravagance.* This great estate was then sold in different lots, with the result that in 1800 Bīrbhūm, instead of consisting of one single estate, was divided into 220 zamīndāris held by 233 registered proprietors and paying a total land revenue of *sicca* Rs. 6,93,682. The only portions of the estate left to the Rājā were Sarath Deoghar (now in the Santāl Parganas) and the Ganutiā estate, which was leased out to Mr. Frushard, the Commercial Agent.

The most noticeable features of the subsequent history of the district have been the increasing subdivision of estates and the resumption proceedings instituted in 1835. As regards the former, though the area of the district was reduced to 1,344 square miles by the transfer in 1855 of several *parganas* in the west and north-west to the Santāl Parganas, the number of estates was more than doubled and the number of individual proprietors multiplied nearly ten-fold in 70 years; for in 1870-71 there were 510 separate estates paying revenue to Government owned by 2,036 registered proprietors. As regards the latter, the Collector in reporting on the rent-free lands in 1820, wrote that the original donees and their representatives "with a few trifling exceptions have been stripped of every portion by the hundred purchasers of the ancient Rājā's zamīndāris."

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* E. G. Drake-Brockman, *Notes on the Early Administration of Birbhūm*, p. 10.

† Fifth Report, p. 647.

The *chākrān* lands for the support of the village police and other public servants, which had been excluded from assessment prior to, or at the time of, the decennial settlement were, the Magistrate complained, resumed wholesale by the auction purchasers of the estates. These circumstances eventually led to the Resumption Regulations being enforced, and in 1835 and the following years operations under them were carried out all over the district.*

LAND TENURES.

Estates.

According to the returns for 1908-09, there are 1,058 estates on the revenue roll of Bīrbhūm, of which 1,052 are permanently settled, one is temporarily settled and five are held direct by Government. The number of revenue-paying estates and revenue-free estates assessed to road and public works cesses is 2,045 and 399 respectively, the number of recorded share-holders being no less than 16,979.

The permanently settled estates are of different origin and include the following:—(1) *Zamīndāri mahāls*, or ordinary revenue-paying estates, which originally formed part of the large property of the Rājā of Bīrbhūm. These estates are also commonly known as *lāts*, owing to the fact that more than a century ago the large estate of the Rājā of Bīrbhūm was split up and sold in separate lots. (2) *Thānādāri mahāls, i.e.*, estates in which originally the whole or part of the land revenue was remitted on condition of the holder providing for police duties. These duties were eventually abolished and revenue assessed instead. (3) *Hazūri tāluks, i.e.*, independent *tāluks*, which paid their quota of revenue direct into the treasury and not through the zamīndār, and the holders of which became recognized as zamīndārs. These *tāluks* are now identical with zamīndāris, but some have specific names attached to them, *e.g.*, *āimā* (the plural of *imām*), *madadmāsh*, *bhātiāimā* (from *bhāt* or cooked rice and *āimā*) and *nankar* lands, *i.e.*, lands which were originally granted by the landholders or rulers to relatives, learned or pious persons, or to officers of State for their maintenance, subject to the payment of a small quit-rent or revenue. (4) *Jangalburi mahāls*, permanently-settled estates, in which the owner has the right of cutting jungle only. (5) *Jalkar* estates in which fishery rights only are permanently settled. Revenue-free estates are generally known as *sidha lākhirāj* or *doem khalāshi lākhirāj* as distinguished from simple *lāhkirāj* or rent-free holdings. The usually fall under the same classes as the latter, which are described below.

* E. G. Drake-Brockman, *Early Administration of Birbhūm*, p. 11.

Tenures of the first degree, *i.e.*, those of which the holders pay rent direct to the zamīndārs and themselves collect rent from their tenants, are very numerous, the distinctions between them being in many cases merely nominal. They fall under two main heads, viz., *tāluks* or grants and *ijārās* or leases. The former are known as dependent or *petao tāluks*, and the *tālukdār* stands towards the zamīndār in the same position as the latter does to Government. Tenures.

The following are the different classes of dependent *tāluks* :—(1) *Shikmī* or *mazkuri tāluks*, tenures which existed before the permanent settlement. (2) *Istimrāri tāluks*, granted in perpetuity. (3) *Mukarari tāluks*, of which the rental was fixed in perpetuity at their creation. (4) *Maurusi tāluks*, or tenures which are hereditary whether the rent is fixed or not. (5) *Patnī tāluks*, *i.e.*, *tāluks* granted subject to the liabilities of Regulation VIII of 1819. These *tāluks*, which have been created since the Permanent Settlement, were first introduced on the estates of the Mahārājā of Burdwān for the purpose of enabling him to collect his rents more easily. The rights of a *patnī tālukdār* are capable of being sublet to subordinate holders, with the exception that, on the sale of the parent *patnī* for arrears of rent or other default, all subordinate tenures derived therefrom, such as *dar-patnis*, *se-patnis* and *chaharam patnīs*, are extinguished. (6) *Mukarari chak jamā tāluk*, *i.e.*, a tenure comprising a part of a village, which is leased out at a fixed rent in perpetuity. Dependent *tāluks* are also known as *āimā*, *bhātiāimā*, *madad-māsh* and *mankar* according to the object for which they were created.

Ijārās or leases vary in character, according to the special terms of each contract, from a lease for a single year to a lease in perpetuity at a fixed rent. They are generally, however, created for a fixed term of years, and their chief characteristic is that the holder of the tenure is a mere middleman or farmer, who does not cultivate the estate himself, but only collects rents from the tenants. They are of the following kinds :—*Istimrāri* or perpetual leases, generally granted before the time of the Permanent Settlement and regarded as hereditary and transferable. *Mukarari* or leases in perpetuity at a fixed rent, hereditary and transferable. The grant of such a lease is generally made in consideration of a bonus paid down at the time of the grant. *Maurusi* leases, which are hereditary, but not necessarily transferable or bearing a fixed rental. *Sudibudi*, an usufructuary mortgage, under which a farm of an estate or part of it is granted to liquidate the debts due by the lessor. The lessee or creditor retains the rents, and both interest and capital *Ijārās.*

are liquidated thereby. *Samsudi*, a form of mortgage, in which the farm liquidates interest only. It is sometimes also called *katkina*, a term which is also used for any ordinary sub-lease. *Miādi ijārā*, an ordinary lease for a term of years. *Mānjhi jots* are another class of lease in vogue in Santāl villages, where the *mānjhi* or headman takes a settlement of the whole village from the zamīndār for a specified term at a lump rental and makes his own arrangements for rent with the other cultivators, to whom he lets out the land.

Sub-tenures. Tenures of the second degree or sub-tenures go by the same names as tenures of the first degree, with the prefix of *dar* (under), *se* (third degree), and *chaharam* (fourth degree), *e.g.*, *dar-patnī*, *se-mukarari ijārā*, etc. A *gānti jamā* is a special form of sub-tenure, in which no fixed term of years is specified in the agreement between the lessor and lessee. The rent is not absolutely fixed, but liable to enhancement, while the sub-tenure-holder cannot be ejected at will and may transfer his rights.

Tenants' holdings. Tenants' holdings fall under three classes:—(1) lands cultivated by rent-paying tenants (*jot-jamā*), (2) lands cultivated rent-free (*lākhirāj*), and (3) service lands (*chākrān*). The *jots* or rent-paying tenants' holdings, properly speaking, should all be merged in the classes recognized by the Tenancy Act, viz., tenancies at fixed rates of rent, occupancy tenancies (*dākhali-bāsista*), tenancies held by non-occupancy ryots who may or may not have a registered lease for a fixed term (*miādi-jot*) or with no limit of term. Locally, however, they are known by different names, such as *istimrāri*, *mukarari*, *maurusi* and *gānti jot*, which have the same connotation as in the case of tenures. Other holdings are:—*kherāj kharidā jot*, a holding for which a small fixed quit-rent is paid in consideration of a lump sum paid down at its creation, and *bāhar-kharidā jot*, which is the same, except that the holder was previously in possession and paid at full rates of rent until the special agreement was made. Tenants are also called *khudkāst* or *phikāsaht* according as they reside in or out of the village in which they hold land.

Under-tenants. Sub-tenants paying cash rents are known as *korfā* ryots, and their holdings as *korfā jot*. When rent is paid in kind, a sub-tenancy is usually known as *bhāg jot*. They include the following varieties:—*ardha-bhāg jot*, when the produce is equally divided between the sub-tenant and the superior holdings; *thīkā*, when the sub-tenant contracts to supply a fixed amount of produce, taking all risks and bearing all expenses of cultivation; this is sometimes called *dhān-thikā*; *hal-krishi-krishāni*, in which the cultivator is a mere labourer who does the work and receives one-third of the outturn, the tenant supplying seed, etc.; *athārabaisa*

jot, in which the under-tenant gets $\frac{18}{40}$ths of the produce, but does all the work of cultivation and supplies seed, etc.; *pānch ardha jot*, in which the under-tenant gets $\frac{3}{5}$ths of the produce, doing all the work and supplying seed, etc.

Rent-free holdings.

Rent-free holdings may be divided into two classes, viz., those of Hindu and those of Muhammadan origin. The former are as follows:—*Debottar* and *Sibottar* are lands devoted to the support of the worship of some idol, which are held rent-free by its custodian or *sebak* as a trustee. *Brahmottar* are lands set apart for the support of Brāhmans, and *Vaishnavottar* are similar lands allotted to Vaishnava devotees. *Mahattrān* are lands allotted to learned or holy men other than Brāhmans. *Khushbāsh* are lands allotted to deserving persons rent-free to induce them to live in a village.

The following rent-free holdings are of Muhammadan origin and are known generally as *wakf*:—*Pirān* or *pirottar*, lands allotted to meet the charges connected with the maintenance of the tomb (*astānah*) of a Muhammadan saint or *pīr*. They are held in trust by a *mutwāli*, who has no power to alienate or encumber the property. *Fakīrān*, lands allotted for the maintenance of an establishment for providing food and shelter for *fakīrs* or wandering Musalmān hermits. *Chirāghi*, lands allotted rent-free to meet the charge of procuring lamps for and illuminating mosques or the tombs of Muhammadan saints. *Nazarāt*, lands bestowed rent-free with a view to meeting the charges for offerings to a *pir's* tomb on festival days. *Khairāti*, lands of which the proceeds are intended to be spent in the bestowal of alms. *Khānābāri*, lands bestowed rent-free on worthy Muhammadans to encourage them to reside in a village. *Mullāki*, lands bestowed rent-free upon *mullās* or Musalmān religious teachers for their own maintenance, and also for the support of the *madrāsas* or Muhammadan schools over which they preside. *Azāndāri*, lands granted to the men who call Muhammadans to prayer (*azān*).

Service holdings.

Chākrān or service holdings are holdings given rent-free as payment for service rendered by the holder to the donor. They fall under two heads, viz., lands granted for services of a public nature, and lands granted for services of a private nature, rendered to the village or the zamīndār only. The first are not strictly hereditary, but are generally so in practice, as the son has a traditional claim to succeed his father. The second are generally hereditary. Neither are transferable.

Under the first head come *chaukīdāri chākrān* lands set aside for the maintenance of the village police, which have been recently resumed by Government, and the *daftri chākrān* lands held by

daftris, which are peculiar to this district. A number of *daftris* are supported by these grants and are employed in the Collectorate office. There were formerly also some *ghātwali* or *ghāt chaukīdāri* lands held by *ghātwāls*, whose duty it was to patrol roads, to protect travellers from robbers, and to guard the gates or entrances of the great wall of Nagar, but these have been resumed. The following hold *chākrān* lands of the second class:—the *simānādār* who watches the village boundaries to prevent encroachments; the *halshana* or *paik*, a peon who helps the *gumāshta* to collect rents; the *purohit* or Brāhman who conducts the worship of the village idol; the *kāmār* or village blacksmith, one of whose duties is the sacrifice of goats on certain occasions; the *kumhār* or village potter, *nāpit* or barber, *māli* or gardener, and *dhobi* or washerman; the *astapahari*, a watchman who stays all day at the zamīndari *kachahri*; the *kāhār* and *adhudār*, bearers of the zamīndār, who have to be out in relays on journeys; the *jhārukash* or sweeper of the zamīndāri *kachahri*; the *rausgir*, who carries the *āmin's* chain at measurements; the *farāsh*, who looks after the zamīndāri carpets, etc.; and the *roshāngir*, who looks after the zamīndāri lamps.

Parganas. The following is a list of the *parganas*, *tappas* and *tāluks* into which the district is divided:—

Akbarshāhi *pargana*.	Kuār Pratāb *pargana*.
Alīnagar ,,	Kutubpur *tāluk*.
Amdaharā *tāluk*.	Mallārpur ,,
Barbaksingh *pargana*.	Mazkuri *pargana*.
Barrah *tāluk*.	Nawā Nagar ,,
Bharkunda *pargana*.	Nuni *tappa*.
Dāri Mauleswar ,,	Purandarpur *tāluk*.
Dhawa ,,	Rukanpur *pargana*.
Fatehpur ,,	Shāh Alampur *tappa*.
Gokulta *chaklā*.	Senbhūm *pargana*.
Haripur *tappa*.	Supur *tāluk*.
Hukmāpur *tāluk*.	Swarupsingh *pargana*.
Ichhāpukur ,,	Sabak Mayūreswar ,,
Kasbipur *pargana*.	Sherpur ,,
Kashtagarh ,,	Shāh Islāmpur ,,
Khargrām ,,	Shāhbāzpur ,,
Khatanga ,,	Zainujial ,,
Khirni *tappa*.	

CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

ADMINISTRATIVE CHARGES AND STAFF.

FOR administrative purposes the district is divided into two subdivisions, viz., Surī (the Sadar subdivision) and Rāmpur Hāt, the former being under the direct supervision of the Collector, while Rāmpur Hāt is in charge of a Subdivisional Officer. At Surī the sanctioned staff under the Collector consists of three Deputy Collectors, of whom two are Magistrates of the first class, and one is vested with the powers of a Magistrate of the second or third class; in addition to these officers, there are sometimes one or two Sub-Deputy Collectors. At Rāmpur Hāt the Subdivisional Officer is assisted by a Sub-Deputy Collector.

REVENUE.

The revenue of the district, under the main heads, rose from Rs. 11,31,000 in 1880-81, when the income-tax had not been imposed, to Rs. 14,48,000 in 1890-91 and to Rs. 16,45,000 in 1900-01. In 1908-09 it amounted to Rs. 17,72,987, of which Rs. 10,16,024 were derived from land revenue, Rs. 3,15,975 from stamps, Rs. 2,53,106 from excise, Rs. 1,56,358 from cesses, and Rs. 31,524 from income-tax.

Land revenue.

The collections of land revenue increased from Rs. 8,03,000 in 1880-81 to Rs. 10,22,000 in 1890-91, the increase being mainly due to the transfer from Murshidābād of *pargana* Kuār Pratāb belonging to the Nashipur Ward's Estate. In 1900-01 they were Rs. 10,09,000, and in 1908-09 they aggregated Rs. 10,16,024, collected from 1,058 estates. The current land revenue demand in the latter year was Rs. 10,08,673, of which Rs. 10,05,792 were payable by 1,052 permanently-settled estates and Rs. 140 by one temporarily-settled estate, while the demand from five estates held direct by Government was Rs. 2,741. The total land revenue demand is equivalent to 33 per cent. of the gross rental of the district.

Stamps. The receipts from judicial and non-judicial stamps rank next in importance as a source of revenue. They increased from Rs. 2,27,125 in 1897-98 to Rs. 2,49,428 in 1900-01, and rose still further to Rs. 3,15,975 in 1908-09. More than three-fourths (Rs. 2,48,255) of the receipts in 1908-09 were obtained from the sale of judicial stamps, and in particular of court-fee stamps, which accounted for Rs. 2,28,964; while only Rs. 67,720 were obtained from the sale of non-judicial stamps, nearly the whole of this sum being due to the demand for impressed stamps.

Excise. The receipts from excise rose from Rs. 1,83,916 in 1897-98 to Rs. 2,29,557 in 1900-01, and further increased in 1908-09 to Rs. 2,53,106, a total lower than for any other district in the Burdwān Division except Bānkurā and Howrah (exclusive of the towns of Howrah and Bally). The net excise revenue in the latter year was Rs. 2,690 per 10,000 of the population (nearly $4\frac{1}{4}$ annas per head), as compared with Rs. 2,643 for the Burdwān Division and Rs. 3,191 for the Province.

Nearly half of the excise revenue is derived from the receipts from *pachwai* or rice-beer, which amounted to Rs. 1,24,409 in 1908-09, a total higher than in any other district in the Province except Burdwān. This is the favourite drink of the aboriginal races, who regard it as a nutritious food and utilize it as a substitute for a meal. The receipts from the sale of country spirit, prepared by distillation from the flower of the *mahuā* tree (*Bassia latifolia*), amounted to Rs. 38,846 in the same year. The manufacture and sale of this spirit were formerly carried on under what is known as the central distillery system, *i.e.*, there was a central distillery at Surī for the supply of the spirit to the whole of the district. In 1907-08 the contract supply system was introduced, *i.e.*, the local manufacture of country spirit has been prohibited, and a contract for the wholesale supply of spirit given out to a firm of distillers. The contractors are forbidden to hold any retail licenses for its sale, but are allowed the use of distillery and warehouse buildings for the storage of liquor. The right of retail vend is disposed of by separate shops, each of which is put up to auction; and the retail vendors are forbidden to sell liquor except at prescribed strengths, for which maximum prices are fixed.

According to the returns for 1908-09, there are 28 shops licensed for the retail sale of country spirit, *i.e.*, one shop to every 62·6 square miles and to every 32,224 persons; in that year the average consumption of the liquor was 8 proof gallons per 1,000 of the population, the incidence of taxation per head of the population being only 8 pies. The consumption of the

fermented liquor known as *tāri* is insignificant, bringing in only Rs. 3,294. The total receipts from the sale of country spirit, *tāri* and *pachwai* represented an expenditure of Rs. 1,877 per 10,000 of the population, a figure lower than that returned by any district in the Burdwān Division except Bānkurā and Midnapore.

The receipts from opium and hemp drugs account for practically all the remainder of the excise revenue. The greater portion is derived from the duty and license fees on opium, which brought in Rs. 38,995 in 1908-09, representing an expenditure of Rs. 432 per 10,000 of the population, which is less than in any other district in the Burdwān Division except Bānkurā. The demand for *gānja*, *i.e.*, the dried flowering tops of the cultivated female hemp plant (*Cannabis Indica*) and the resinous exudation on it, appears to be greater than in any other district of the division except Bānkurā and Howrah (exclusive of the towns of Howrah and Bally), the duty and license fees realizing Rs. 38,362 in 1908-09, or Rs. 493 per 10,000 of the population.

Cesses.

Road and public works cesses are, as usual, levied at the maximum rate of one anna in the rupee; the collections fell from Rs. 1,37,301 in 1897-98 to Rs. 1,33,503 in 1900-01, but increased to Rs. 1,56,358 in 1908-09. The current demand in the latter year was Rs. 1,55,108, of which Rs. 1,38,797 were payable by 2,075 revenue-paying estates, Rs. 4,167 by 396 revenue-free estates, and Rs. 12,136 by 3,073 rent-free and *chaukīdari chākrān* lands. Altogether 5,545 estates and 24,760 tenures are assessed to cesses, the number of recorded share-holders being 16,971 and 41,513, respectively.

Income-tax.

In 1901-02 the income-tax yielded Rs. 26,328 paid by 922 assessees, of whom 533 paying Rs. 5,930 had incomes of Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,000. At that time the minimum income assessable was Rs. 500, but this was raised in 1903 to Rs. 1,000, thereby giving relief to a number of petty traders, money-lenders and clerks; and the number of assessees consequently fell in 1903-04 to 455 and the collections to Rs. 26,711. In 1908-09 the tax yielded Rs. 31,524 paid by 507 assessees.

Registration.

There are six offices for the registration of assurances under Act III of 1877. At Surī the District Sub-Registrar deals as usual with the documents presented there, and also assists the District Magistrate, who is *ex-officio* District Registrar, in supervising the proceedings of the Sub-Registrars in charge of the other registration offices. The average number of documents registered annually during the quinquennium ending in 1899

was 21,874, but in the five years ending in 1904 it increased to 26,168, the increase being chiefly due to the settlement of resumed *chaukīdāri* lands. The marginal statement shows the number of documents registered and the receipts and expenditure at each office in 1908. The number of registrations was less than in any other district in the division except Howrah.

Office.	Documents registered.	Receipts.	Expenditure.
		Rs.	Rs.
Surī ...	4,950	9,257	5,185
Bolpur ...	3,044	3,649	2,795
Dubrājpur ...	4,719	5,567	3,367
Lābpur ...	4,065	4,657	2,264
Nalhāti ...	4,400	4,679	3,570
Rāmpur Hāt ...	5,178	5,302	3,557
Total ...	26,356	33,111	20,738

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE.

The staff entertained for the administration of civil justice consists of the District Judge, a Sub-Judge and six Munsifs, of whom one is stationed at Surī, one at Dubrājpur, while two hold their courts at Bolpur and two more at Rāmpur Hāt.

Criminal justice is administered by the District and Sessions Judge, the District Magistrate, and the Deputy and Sub-Deputy Magistrates stationed at Surī and Rāmpur Hāt. The sanctioned staff at Surī consists of the District Magistrate, two Deputy Magistrates of the first class, and one Deputy Magistrate of the second or third class, in addition to the Sub-Deputy Magistrates of the second or third class who are sometimes stationed there. The Subdivisional Officer at Rāmpur Hāt is almost invariably a Magistrate vested with first-class powers, and is usually assisted by a Sub-Deputy Magistrate of the second or third class. Besides these stipendiary Magistrates, there are benches of Honorary Magistrates at Surī and Rāmpur Hāt.

POLICE.

For police purposes the district is divided into nine thānas with four outposts as shown in the margin. The regular police force consisted in 1908 of a Superintendent, 5 Inspectors, 28 Sub-Inspectors, 26 head-constables and 239 constables, a total force of 299 men, representing one policeman to every 5·8 square miles and to every 3,017 of the population. The rural force for the watch and ward of villages in the interior is composed of 172 *dafadārs* and 2,561 *chaukīdārs*. A large

Subdivision.	Thana.	Outpost.
Surī	Bolpur	Ilāmbazar.
	Dubrājpur	Khairāsol.
	Lābpur	......
	Sākulipur	......
	Surī	Muhammad-bazar. Rājnagar. Sainthiā.
Rāmpur Hāt.	Mayūreswar	......
	Murarai	......
	Nalhāti	......
	Rāmpur Hāt	......

proportion of the latter were remunerated by service lands known as *chaukīdāri chākrān* till a few years ago, when they were resumed. This system had been in force for a century past and was described as follows in 1866 by Mr. D. J. McNeile in his Report on the Village Watch of Bengal:—

"Village *chaukīdārs* are found everywhere throughout the district, and are almost everywhere supported by service lands. There can be no kind of doubt that the present *chaukīdārs* are the true modern representatives of the ancient village watchmen of the district, and that at the time of the decennial settlement those watchmen were employed in revenue matters as well as in police duties. In the zamīndāri papers of the Bīrbhūm estate for 1793, *kotwāli* lands are found in the accounts of one village after another entered under the general head of *bāze zamīn* (or lands free of Government assessment), and no other lands are mentioned which can possibly be indentified with the *jāgīrs* of the present *chaukīdārs*. *Kotuāl* was a common name in several districts for a zamīndāri messenger or peon; and to this day some of the village police in parts of Murshidābād transferred from Bīrbhūm are employed by the zamīndārs as messengers, and these constitute the very same section of the force which is now maintained by service land tenures in Bīrbhūm. In 1816, the Magistrate of Bīrbhūm, in a letter to the Superintendent of police, described the village watch as follows:—This *zilā* is one of the few which have had the advantage of a regular assignment of lands for the support of a body of village watchmen; and though there may be reason to suppose that part of the original assignment has been resumed, yet the number maintained is very considerable, and would be sufficient for the protection of the district if they were all solely employed in guarding the villages; but it is the more immediate duty of a large proportion of them to collect the revenues and serve as guides and coolies. Besides the quantity of land set apart for each man, which varies considerably, they derive a considerable accession to their maintenance from contributions of grain made by the villagers. The *chaukīdārs* are nearly all Doms and Hāris. In a few villages they receive, in addition to their *jāgīrs*, a small remuneration in cash from the zamīndār. In most, if not in all, places their subsistence is eked out by contributions of grain collected from the villagers at harvest time."

There is a district jail at Surī with accommodation (in 1908) for 288 prisoners, viz., barracks without separate sleeping accommodation for 216 male convicts, 17 female convicts and 18 under-trial prisoners, cells for 5 male convicts, and a hospital JAILS.

with 32 beds. The only subsidiary jail is that at Rāmpur Hāt, which has accommodation for 15 male and 3 female prisoners. The industries carried on in the district jail are oil-pressing, aloe pounding, weaving of *daris* and *newār*, cane and bamboo work, and wheat-grinding.

CHAPTER XII.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

OUTSIDE the municipality at Surī, local affairs are managed by the District Board, which has jurisdiction over the whole district, and by the Local Boards which have been constituted for each subdivision. The District Board is responsible for the administration of public roads, ferries, pounds, dispensaries, education in primary and middle schools, and sanitation. To the Local Boards, which work in subordination to it, has been delegated the administration of small sums allotted for the construction and repair of village roads. DISTRICT BOARD.

The Bīrbhūm District Board consists of 16 members besides the Chairman, of whom eight are elected by the Local Boards, four are nominated by Government, and four are *ex-officio* members. The returns for 1908-09 show that six of the members were zamindārs, five were Government servants, two were pleaders or mukhtārs, and two more had other occupations, representing 40·0, 33·3 and 13·3 per cent., respectively, of the total number. Exclusive of the opening balance, the total receipts in that year amounted to Rs. 1,40,624, the principal source of revenue being the road cess, which realized Rs. 76,667, as against Rs. 53,563 in 1888-89. Minor items are the receipts from ferries and pounds, which brought in Rs. 824 and Rs. 8,606 respectively. The average incidence of taxation per head was one anna four pies. The total expenditure in the same year was Rs. 1,33,148, the chief items being Rs. 87,078 expended on public works, Rs. 24,656 on education, and Rs. 9,589 on medical relief and sanitation. As regards the different items of expenditure, the District Board maintains 182 miles of metalled roads, and 303 miles of unmetalled roads, besides 172 miles of village tracks, the average cost of repairing which was Rs. 184, Rs. 21 and Rs. 14 per mile, respectively, in 1908-09. It keeps up 3 Middle schools and gives grants-in-aid to 30 Middle schools, 93 Upper Primary, 777 Lower Primary and 53 other schools. It further maintains 2 dispensaries, and aids four others at a total cost in 1908-09 of Rs. 5,061 or 8·3 per cent. of the ordinary income

of the Board; and in order to furnish the villages with water supply, it makes a grant of Rs. 5,000 per annum for sinking wells, etc. The veterinary dispensary at Surī is also maintained by the District Board.

The average income and expenditure of the District Board are shown approximately in the following table under the principal heads:—

Income.	Rs.	*Expenditure.*	Rs.
Road cess receipts ...	76,000	Civil works	83,000
Civil works (including average yearly Government grant) ...	20,000	Education	23,000
Education (including school fees and Government grant) ...	16,000	Medical	8,000
Pounds	8,000	General administration ...	5,000
Medical (from endowments and subscriptions) ...	1,500	Veterinary dispensary, bull and stallion, fairs and exhibitions ...	2,000
Ferries	1,000	Pounds	800
Miscellaneous ...	500	Miscellaneous ...	1,200
Total ...	1,23,000	Total ...	1,23,000

With reference to this table, it may be stated that the road cess income is ear-marked for expenditure on civil works, and any diversion from it has to be made good from a special grant made by the Commissioner. The latter, which is generally equal to a quarter of the Provincial rates of the district, is chiefly allotted for the construction or improvement of roads and bridges, and for medical and sanitary purposes. The expenditure on education is met from the income from pounds and ferries and from the Government grants assigned for this purpose, supplemented by small receipts from school fees.

LOCAL BOARDS. Two Local Boards have been established, one for each subdivision. The Sadar or Surī Local Board has eleven members, of whom seven are nominated and four are elected; while the Rāmpur Hāt Local Board has nine members, of whom four are nominated, and five are elected. They do little work beyond managing pounds and ferries and looking after the village roads.

MUNICIPALITIES. Surī. At present the only municipality in the district is Surī, which was created in 1876. The area within municipal limits is 2½ square miles with a population of 8,692, of whom 1,612 or 18·54 per cent. are tax-payers. It is administered by 16 Commissioners, of whom eleven are elected, two are nominated and three are *ex-officio* members. The average annual income during the decade ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 11,000, and the average annual expenditure

was Rs. 10,000. In 1908-09 the receipts, excluding the opening balance, amounted to Rs. 16,832, of which the major portion was obtained from a tax on persons assessed at the rate of Re. 1-2 per cent. on incomes exceeding Rs. 30 a month and at the rate of Re. 1 per cent. on incomes up to Rs. 30 a month. This tax yielded Rs. 4,483, and latrine fees Rs. 4,086 in 1908-09. The incidence of taxation was Re. 1-3-8 per head of the population, and the total expenditure in the same year was Rs. 15,536.

CHAPTER XIII.

EDUCATION.

PROGRESS OF EDUCATION.

DURING the last half century there has been a noticeable diffusion of education in Bīrbhūm. In the year 1856-57 there were only three Government and aided schools in the whole district, but in 1870-71 their number has risen to 81, the number of pupils increasing in the same period from 247 to 2,810. There were also in the latter year 544 private and unaided schools not under inspection by the Education Department, which, it was estimated, were attended by 7,103 pupils. During Sir George Campbell's administration of Bengal a great expansion of primary education, under a system of village teachers, took place. The result was that at the end of 1872-73 there were in Bīrbhūm 129 Government and aided schools attended by 4,439 pupils, besides 17 unaided schools attended by 445 pupils, making a total of 146 schools inspected by the department and attended by 4,884 pupils. The subsequent progress of education in the district will be sufficiently demonstrated by the marginal table. No less than 47·7 per cent. of the total number of boys of school-going age were attending school in 1908-09, and further proof of the advance made is afforded by the census statistics, which show that in 1901 15·3 per cent. of the male and 0·4 per cent of the female population—in all, 7·7 per cent. of the total population—were literate, *i.e.*, able to read and write, whereas in 1881 only 9·2 per cent. of the male and 0·1 per cent. of the female population could satisfy this simple standard.

Year.		Institutions.	Pupils.
1892-93	...	1,009	24,043
1901-02	...	977	27,668
1908-09	...	1,191	34,822

EDUCATIONAL STATISTICS.

Of the 1,191 schools now in existence 1,168, with 34,317 scholars, are public institutions, while only 23, attended by 505 pupils, are private institutions. The public institutions include 53 secondary schools for boys with 5,845 pupils, 1 Secondary school for girls with 35 pupils, 928 Primary schools for boys with 24,904 pupils, 79 Primary schools for girls with 1,225 pupils, and 107 other schools with 2,308 pupils.

The inspecting staff consists of a Deputy Inspector of Schools, two Additional Deputy Inspectors, eight Sub-Inspectors, two Assistant Sub-Inspectors and eight Inspecting Pandits. There is also an Assistant Sub-Inspector of Schools with headquarters at Surī, who inspects Santāl schools in this district as well as in Bānkurā and Midnapore.

COLLEGIATE EDUCATION. There is one college in the district, the Krishna Chandra College at Hetampur, which was founded in the name of her father-in-law by the late Rānī Padmasundarī Devī of Hetampur and opened in 1897. The college building is a substantial structure formerly used for the worship of the goddess Saraswatī. By a registered trust-deed the late proprietress endowed the college with an annual income of Rs. 6,100 chargeable on certain of her estates in the districts of Bīrbhūm and the Santāl Parganas. The management of the college is in the hands of a committee, and the staff consists of a Principal and Professors of English, Physics, Mathematics, History and Sanskrit. This college has been recommended by the University for affiliation up to the Intermediate Examination in Arts under the new regulations in English, Bengali, Logic, History, Sanskrit, Mathematics and Physics. The tuition fee is Rs. 3-8 per month, and five free studentships are granted, according to the rules of the college, to deserving candidates in each class. There is a hostel attached to the college under the charge of a resident superintendent.* The college is maintained by the Rājā Bahādur of Hetampur, and the number of students on the rolls on 31st March 1909 was 46.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS. There are seven High schools in the district, with 1,610 pupils on the rolls in 1908-09, of which one, the Zilā school at Surī, is maintained by Government, and another, the Kirnahar High School, is unaided. The other five schools, which are all aided, are situated at Bandgara, Hetampur, Lābpur, Lakrakunda and Rāmpur Hāt. There used to be another unaided High school at Surī known as the Surī Gadādhar Institution, but this was closed in 1908-09. There are no less than 25 Middle schools (20 aided and 5 unaided) attended by 2,565 boys and 15 girls, and 19 Middle Vernacular schools (three maintained by the District Board, twelve aided and four unaided), at which 1,615 boys and 39 girls are under instruction.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS. Of the 928 Primary schools for boys, 99 schools with 4,469 pupils, are Upper Primary schools. Four of these are under Government management, being attached to as many Government *guru*-training schools, 94 are aided, and one is unaided.

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* Calcutta University Calendar, 1909, Part II, p. 813.

There are also 829 Lower Primary schools for boys with 20,435 pupils, of which 777 receive aid from public funds and 52 are unaided. Under this head may be mentioned 44 night schools, which are conducted by the teachers of day schools and have no existence apart from the latter.

GIRLS' SCHOOLS. At the end of 1908-09 altogether 2,985 girls were under instruction, 1,504 reading in boys' schools and 1,481 in girls' schools. The number of the latter is 80, and all but one are Lower Primary schools, 68 being aided and 11 unaided. The one exception is the Middle Vernacular school at Surī, called the Rivers Thomson Girls' School, after a former Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. The Baptist Zenāna Mission (a branch of that at Entally) has recently established a boarding school at Surī for aboriginal or semi-aboriginal girls converted to Christianity, and has rented 4 acres of land to the west of the Circuit House compound for the construction of a building.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS. Among other schools may be mentioned four *guru*-training schools for the training of village school teachers, and ten Sanskrit *tols*, which have adopted the departmental standard for examinations in Sanskrit. For the advancement of Muhammadan education there is one *madrasa* at Sukrābād and a number of *maktabs*.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS. The private schools of the district consist of two Sanskrit *tols*, 14 Korān schools for boys and five for girls, and two other schools. The number of private Korān schools has decreased considerably of late years owing to several of them having adopted the curriculum prescribed by the Education Department.

EDUCATION OF SANTALS. Special measures are adopted in this district for the encouragement of education among the Santāls, for whom 64 schools have been specially opened. These schools have 1,510 pupils on the rolls, of whom 1,273 are Santāls. An Assistant Sub-Inspector has also been appointed for the inspection of such schools in this district and in the districts of Bānkurā and Midnapore.

LIBRARIES AND NEWSPAPERS. There is a public library at Surī started in 1900 and located in the Surī Rām Ranjan Town Hall building. It is maintained from public subscriptions and from contributions made by the District Board and the Surī Municipality. There is also a library attached to the Zilā school, which can be used by the public on payment of subscriptions.

Two Bengali weekly newspapers are printed and published at Surī; one is called the *Bīrbhūm Barta* and the other the *Bīrbhūm Hitaishi*. They deal chiefly with matters of local interest. Formerly a monthly magazine, called the *Bīrbhūmi*, was printed at Kirnahar under the patronage of the local zamīndars.

CHAPTER XIV.

GAZETTEER.

Amdaharā.—A village in the Surī subdivision, situated six miles north-east of Bolpur. It contains a shrine of the goddess Kangkālī, to which pilgrims resort, and was formerly the seat of a Munsif's Court (since transferred to Bolpur). Brass utensils of good quality are made in the village.

Bakreswar.—A village in the Surī subdivision, situated 12 miles south-west of Surī and a mile south of Tāntipārā. It contains a large group—almost a small city—of temples and a number of sulphurous hot springs, with cold springs in close proximity to them. They all discharge into a rivulet, which runs past them and joins a small stream about 200 yards from the temples. The hot springs are regarded as a manifestation of divine power, and are frequented by barren women and women suffering from miscarriage, who are believed to derive special benefit from diving under a submerged arch in one of the reservoirs. Captain Sherwill found that the temperature of the hottest spring was 162° Fahr. and of the coolest 128° at noon on 28th December 1850, the temperature of the air in shade being 77,° while the temperature of the stream above the influence of the hot springs was 83°. From the hottest spring about 120 cubic feet of water per minute were ejected. Bakreswar is a popular place of pilgrimage, and at the annual *melā* held on the Sivarātri day and the following seven or eight days over 30,000 people assemble. The following account of the springs and temples by Mr. F. H. B. Skrine, a former Collector of Bīrbhūm, is interesting as a record of local legends and popular beliefs.

Once upon a time, the renowned sages Subrita and Lomas received an invitation to attend the *sayambar* or marriage rites of Lakshmī. On their arrival at the hall of ceremonies Lomas was welcomed first by the attendant host, a slight which his companion resented by incontinently quitting the assembly. So fierce, indeed, was his anger that his limbs assumed ungraceful curves in no less than eight places, whence he took the cognomen of Astabakra. Thus disfigured and disconsolate, he wandered till he arrived at Kāsi (Benāres) intent on worshipping Siva. He was then informed that his prayers could not be

answered till they were offered at an undefined spot named Gupta Kási (the hidden Benáres) in the distant realm of Gaur (Bengal). Astabakra's pilgrimage therefore took an eastern direction and ended at Bakreswar, where he adored Siva for ten thousand years. The god, touched by the persistence of his votary, declared that those who worshipped Astabakra first and himself afterwards would be vouchsafed an endless store of blessings. Viswakarmá, the architect of the gods, received a command to erect a temple on the auspicious spot, and a stately shrine soon rose on the eastern shore of the river Bakreswar containing two graven images, the larger of which represented Astabakra.

This shrine still stands to give ocular demonstration of this narrative, though, sooth to say, its appearance would indicate a less remote antiquity and a more common-place origin. It differs neither in size nor other essentials from the temples which swarm in our larger cities, and its style of architecture is decidedly modern. No inscription exists on the central building, but a tablet let into the pediment of an outwork on the north-east records the fact that this portion of the edifice was erected by one Darpanārāyan in the year Sālivāhana 1683, *i.e.*, 1761 A. D. Two other stones inserted in an interior wall east of the temple give the names of two brothers named Hatambar and Taralāsara, and a third bears the date of 1677 Sālivāhana or 1755 A. D., but is otherwise illegible. These annexes are to all appearances as old as Viswakarmá's alleged handiwork, and it is doubtful if any portion of the buildings, as they stand, dates further back than the commencement of the 18th century. Their purlieus are more interesting. They consist of streets upon streets of miniature fanes, each containing the phallic emblem of Mahādeva in graven stone, erected from time to time by wealthy worshippers. But for their uniformity the impression left on the mind of one threading the labyrinth would be that he was visiting the older portion of some great cemetery, so precisely similar in style and appearance are these smaller temples to the tombs most affected by our predecessors of the 18th century. To the south-west of this curious group are three tanks of various sizes known as the Shāt Kātāli, the Chandra Sāyer and the Damu Sāyer. Their origin is lost in the mists of time, but the attendant priests aver that they are named after the votaries at whose expense they were exacavated.

Southwards the hot springs, to which this mass of buildings owes its existence, send skyward their clouds of sulphurous vapour. They are eight in number and of varying temperature; that of the hottest, known as the Agni Kundu, is not far

short of 200° Fahr. Each is enclosed in a cistern 10 feet in depth, and of dimensions ranging from a square of 9 feet to a rectangle of 75 by 30 feet. Bathers descend to the healing waters by easy steps, and considerable pains are taken to remove the scum and cleanse these Bethesdas from the snakes and frogs which commit suicide in their boiling depths. The origin of the group is detailed with much unction in a palm-leaf chronicle, which is carefully preserved. Siva Hatakakhya, it appears, dwells in Hades (*Pātāl*) and bears on his head the lofty mountain Sumeru, down whose side meanders the sacred river Bhāgīrathī. Its waters under the influence of Siva's divine virtue (*tej*) are raised to boiling point and force their way to the earth's surface.

Each spring has its individual history. It is told of the Agni Kundu that in ancient times there lived a Rājā named Hiranya Kasyapa, who cherished a deep and lasting hatred for Krishna. His heir-apparent, Prahlād, so far from inheriting his sire's prejudices, became a steadfast worshipper of that divinity, and consequently underwent many cruel chastisements and much obloquy. Krishna at last intervened in favour of his persecuted follower and slew the impious mortal who had braved his ire. But Prahlād had a tender conscience which perpetually accused him of having been a party to the deadly crime of parricide. He therefore went forth on an expiatory pilgrimage, and, successful in his prayers at divers holy places, at length arrived at Bakreswar, where he worshipped Siva, bathed in this spring and obtained salvation.

Of the Brahma Kundu it is related that the god Brahmā looked with lascivious eyes on his daughter, but his sin of thought did not escape Siva's omniscience. He was roundly taken to task and ordered to do penance for his unholy desires. He therefore undertook a pilgrimage to Bakreswar, bathed in this stream, adored Siva and was purged of his crime.

Setganga is called after a Rājā named Set of Mangalkot in the Burdwān district, who attracted Siva's notice by the fervour of his devotion at this shrine, and being desired by the deity to name a wish, prayed that this spring might bear his name, a favour which was graciously accorded. This spring is enclosed in by far the largest basin. It is solidly constructed and was probably excavated by the person after whom it is called. In connection with the Sanbhagya Kundu, the legend tells how Gaurī, the daughter of Himālaya, being consumed with a burning passion for Siva, in hopes of propitiating whom she came to Bakreswar, bathed in this stream and adored the object of her love.

The god heard her prayer and promised to espouse her, an undertaking which he subsequently carried out. Of the Sūrjya Kundu it is related that once upon a time the sage Nārada, in the course of his travels, arrived at the foot of Mount Vindhya and there sang the praises of the rival hill of Sumeru. The outraged peak thereupon raised his crest so high as to obscure the rays of the sun. The latter (Sūrjya) in dire distress made a pilgrimage to the banks of this stream, and there implored Siva to restore his vanished light. His entreaty was heard, and the swelling Vindhya forced to subside to his normal altitude.

The legend of the Jiban Kundu is as follows :—In old days there lived an aged couple named Sarva and Charumati, who were pious, virtuous, and as liberal as their narrow means allowed. Being without kith or kin they forsook the world and retired to a forest to worship God in the calm of religious seclusion. But their day dreams were rudely dispelled by the advent of a tiger, which slew and partially devoured the unhappy Sarva. His wife in her grief entreated Siva to restore her husband, and was directed to collect his bones and to wend her way to Bakreswar and plunge them into this spring She obeyed and was overjoyed to see the mortal remains suddenly endowed with life. The same experiment has since been tried, admittedly without success ; but mothers, whose children die young, bathe in this spring in order to lengthen the days of those with whom they may subsequently be blessed.

The pious fable of the Bhairab Kundu is that the gods Brahmā and Siva had each five faces, a fact which moved the former to assert an equality with the latter. Siva in anger at this presumption tore off one of his matted locks, from which emerged a deity Batuka Bhairab. The new-comer humbly asked wherefore his creator had made him, and was told that it was his duty as a good son to cut off Brahmā's foremost head with his finger. No sooner said than done ; but the amputated head clung tightly to the executioner's finger, and pilgrimages to the uttermost end of Bhārat were powerless to remove this incubus. At last, the unhappy Bhairab arrived at Kāsi, where his prayers were partly effectual. The head dropped off, but a wound remained and refused to heal. Distracted with pain Bhairab began his wanderings anew, and they ended not till he had reached Bakreswar and bathed in the spring which bears his name. Here he also plunged his tortured limb in the Pāp Hara (sin-destroyer), as that portion of the river Bakreswar, which lies eastward of the spring, is styled. These repeated ablutions were effectual in removing the pain and scars.

The legend of Khar Kundu remains to be told, and is the shortest of those current at Bakreswar. In the Satya Yuga the ocean was drunk dry by the sage Maharshi Angasta, and only got back its waters after a prolonged course of bathing and ablutions to Siva on the banks of this spring.

The worship of Bakreswar is directed by about 25 Pāndās, for whose maintenance certain tracts of rent-free land have been assigned by wealthy devotees, whose names they have rather ungratefully forgotten. They also reap a considerable harvest from pilgrims on the occasion of a great annual fair known as the Bakreswar *melā*. This is a movable feast, which commences on the day preceding the Sivarātri in Phālgun (February or March) and lasts for about a week. It is largely frequented by the middle and lower classes of Bīrbhūm and the surrounding districts, who combine piety and profit by bathing in the Pāp Hara and laying in their annual stock of articles for household use. Their temporal wants are ministered to by a host of tradesmen, who open temporary booths for the sale of stone-ware made at Pattakona in Burdwān, vessels of brass and bell-metal, mats, piece-goods, plantains from Kātwā and fancy articles (*monohāri jinis*) from Calcutta. A temporary city of thirty or forty thousand inhabitants replaces the jungle interspersed with patches of meagre cultivation, which in ordinary times surrounds this seat of Mahādeva. But the area available is far too small for the motley host that throngs it, and overcrowding, with its train of moral evil and bodily suffering, supervenes.

As to the curative properties of the springs, the Pāndās assert their efficacy for bronchitis, phthisis, diabetes, and nearly every description of skin disease, and quote innumerable cases in which persons afflicted with these and other maladies, too numerous to mention, have found relief in the healing streams. While rejecting their claims to the dignity of a panacea, it is reported that the Bakreswar waters are, in fact, beneficial in cases of chronic bronchitis and skin disease. Moreover, it is said that when, as in many of the springs, sulphur does not exist in too appreciable a quantity, they form a pleasant beverage.

Bhadrapur.—A village in the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision, situated on the Brāhmanī, four miles south of the Lohāpur (formerly Nawādā) station of the Azīmganj branch line. The village is of historic interest as the famous Nand Kumār (Nuncoomar) lived here. The palace in which he lived may still be seen on the banks of the river, but is now in ruins. A portion is still, however, kept up, as it is occupied by the *Naib* and other servants

of the zamīndār of the place, who is known locally as the Kumār. It has an imposing entrance, the outer door being large enough for an elephant with a *howdah* to pass through it. There are two large tanks in the village called Gurusāgar and Rānīsāgar, which are said to have been excavated by Nand Kumār and named after his Guru and Rānī. The village also contains a silk factory belonging to the Bengal Silk Company, which employs about 300 hands and has an outwork at Kaytha, a mile to the east of the Takipur railway station.

Bhandirban.—A village in the Surī subdivision, situated six miles north-west of Surī on the right bank of the river Mor. It contains a large temple dedicated to Bhandeswar Mahādeva and another of Gopāl or Krishna. The former is a lofty building said to have been erected by Lālā Rāmnāth, Dīwān of Muhammad-ul-Zamān Khān, Rājā of Bīrbhūm, at the end of the 18th century. The local legend regarding the image of Gopāl is that a hermit came in the course of his wanderings to Bhandirban, and there put down an image of Gopāl that he was carrying. When he tried to move it again, he found all his efforts in vain. Since then the image has remained at Bhandirban, and the Goshtāstamī has been celebrated every year in honour of Gopāl. This festival takes place in the month of Kārtik, when the village is visited by many pilgrims. There is a magnificent tamarind tree in the village, said to be finer than the one in the Surī cemetery, noble tree though that is.

Bhīmgarh.—An old fort in the Surī subdivision, situated six miles south-west of Dubrājpur close to the banks of the river Ajai. The fort has low earthen ramparts, now beaten by the weather into low gentle mounds. The place is attributed to the five Pāndavas, who are said to have stayed here for some time during their exile. Some hollows in the vicinity—the remains, no doubt, of old tanks—are said to have been caused by the daily pouring out at those spots of the water from their boiled rice, surplus *ghī* and sugarcane juice. A tank in the vicinity is named Sonā Chāl Dīghī, and is said to have yielded gold, which the Pāndavās washed here—hence the name. The interior of the fort is now cultivated, and people say they occasionally come upon *sāl* timber buried underground.

On the south bank of the river, opposite the fort, are a number of small, uninteresting temples, which are also ascribed to the Pāndavas. The five brothers are said to have established five lingams there, which they worshipped; whence the name of the place Pāndareswar. The village lies just on the south bank of the Ajai, and there is a station here of the Ondāl-Sainthiā chord line.

Bhīm is said to have set up another lingam on the other side of the river, close to and west of the old fort: this is now known as Bhīmeswar, and is enshrined in a small modern temple.*

Bīrchandrapur.—A village in the Mayūreswar thāna of the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision, situated eight miles east of the Mallārpur railway station. The Pāndava brothers are said to have lived in the neighbourhood during their long exile, and the village is a place of pilgrimage at which two large *melās* are held, one during the Rās Jātrā festival in Kārtik and the other at the Dol Jātrā festival in Phālgun. There is an image in this village of a deity called Bānka Rai, which is said to have suffered at the hands of the Muhammadan iconoclast Kālāpāhār.

Near this village is a small village named Garbhabās, which is famous as the birthplace of the great Vaishnavite reformer Nityananda. It is a place of pilgrimage, and a *melā* is held there every year in his honour.

Bīrsinghpur or Bīrpur.—A village in the Surī subdivision, situated about six miles north-west of Surī and half a mile from Bhandirban. It contains a temple of Kālī with a stone image, to which an interesting legend attaches. It is said that Kālī was the tutelary goddess of the Bīr Rājās of Nagar, and her image abode in the Kālī Daha tank at Nagar, where people at times saw her hands and head appear above the water. After Nagar was captured by the Muhammadans, one of them washed a knife covered with cow's blood in it, and the goddess fled from the polluted waters. The northern side of the tank fell down, and the water rushed out like a river in flood until it reached the river Khuskarni. Kālī's image went along with the stream and was found and worshipped at Bīrsinghpur. Bīrsinghpur, according to local tradition, is so called after Bīr Singh, one of the Hindu Rājās of Bīrbhūm, who either set up an image there or made it his capital or country seat.

Bolpur.—A village in the south-east of the Surī subdivision, with a railway station on the Loop Line of the East Indian Railway. Population (1901) 3,131. The village contains a Munsif's court, charitable dispensary, police thāna, sub-registry office and high school, and is the chief rice-exporting centre in the district. The village of Supur close to Bolpur is said to have been the seat of Rāja Surat, who made 100,000 sacrifices to Kālī; and it has been suggested that the name Bolpur is derived from *bali* and *pur*, meaning a place of sacrifice.

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* Reports, Arch. Surv., Ind., Vol. VIII, pp. 149-50.

At Bhubandāngā, a mile to the west, is a Brāhmo Samāj building known as the Sāntiniketan (*i.e.*, abode of peace) of Bolpur, which is associated with the life of the great Brāhmo leader Devendra Nāth Tagore. It is described as follows by Mr. J. C. Oman in *The Brahmans, Theists and Muslims of India* (1907, pp. 114-15). "To a spot, situated about a mile from the Bolpur station of the East Indian Railway, now known as the Shāntiniketan of Bolpur, Debendra Nāth was wont to retreat in order to hold communion with God, in other words to practise *Yoga.* He used to pitch a tent there and give himself up to religious meditation in the shade of a particular tree. Eventually he secured about six and-a-half acres of land, built a dwelling-house on it, and, later on, a chapel and a *Brāhmovidyālaya* or school. 'The sanctuary or chapel is a marvellous edifice,' says a pious Bengali pilgrim. 'The roof is tiled, but the enclosure is of glass, some painted and some coloured. The Crystal Palace, London, is a glass house. We have not heard of any other house besides it made of glass. Although in magnitude the Shāntiniketan sanctuary cannot be compared with the famous Crystal Palace, it gives the people some idea as to what sort of edifice the latter is. It undoubtedly is an attraction to the villagers, who come to see it in large numbers. This glass hall is about 60 feet long and about 30 feet broad. The pavement is of white marble. There are suitable inscriptions in it in Sanskrit. It has four gates from four sides of the garden. Towards the eastern gate, there is a beautiful portico with a tower over it, and the word *OM* in Bengali, like the figure of the cross in Christian churches, flourishes over the topmost pinnacle. Suitable inscriptions, both in Sanskrit and Bengali, are inscribed on beautiful pedestals for flower vases, and placed at the approach to the holy place. There is a beautiful artificial fountain, which plays on special occasions, and on the two pillars near it are stuck two large pieces of marble, the one bearing an inscription in Sanskrit and the other in Bengali, describing the blessedness of heaven—of which the place assuredly is the foreshadow.'*

"In the chapel described as above by a devout Bengali admirer, religious services are held regularly twice a day, in accordance with the liturgy of the Adi Brāhman Samāj by a Brāhman appointed for the purpose. Within the precincts of the Shāntiniketan animal food is interdicted. There is a holy of holies in the sanctary, the spot where Debendra Nāth used to practise *Yoga* under a great *chittim* tree. Here

* From *Unity and the Minister,* 13th October 1901, reproduced in *Tattwabodhini Patrikā,* Vol. XV, part III.

stands a small elevated seat made of white marble—the *Vedi*—upon which, lost in contemplation, the minister used to hold communion with God. The *Vedi* is deemed so sacred, that no one but the Master has ever presumed to occupy it. The *chittim* tree at Bolpur is in the belief of Debendra Nāth's followers destined to become in after years as famous as the Bodhī tree at Bodh Gayā, which some four-and-twenty centuries ago witnessed Gautama's great temptation and his final triumph over Mara the Evil One."

Debendra Nāth Tagore gave the Sāntiniketan an endowment for the purposes of a hermitage, where all are welcome to spend a few days in peaceful retirement, free of cost, provided that animal food and alcoholic drink are not consumed on the premises. In [addition to this endowment, he bequeathed a considerable amount for expenditure by trustees on the up-keep of the institution. There is also at this place a school called the Brahma Bidyalaya, which was founded by the poet Rabinda Nath Tagore; it is a boarding school, to which both Brahmos and non-Brahmos are admitted. Its object is to impart a sound education in a religious and good moral atmosphere, and it is conducted on the old Hindu ascetic lines, the ideal being "high thinking and plain living;" its standard is upto the matriculation examination of the Calcutta University, to which, however, it is not affiliated.

Dubrājpur.—A village in the Surī subdivision, situated 14 miles south-west of Surī. Though returned as a village, it is practically a large straggling market town with many suburbs, and in 1901 had, with Islāmpur, a population of 6,715 persons. There is a railway station here on the Ondāl-Sainthiā branch of the East Indian Railway, situated 380 feet above sea-level, but the village itself is higher. It also contains a Munsif's court, sub-registry office, police thāna, Middle English school, post and telegraph office, and an inspection bungalow. The village, which lies within the zamīndāri of the Rājā Bahādur of Hetampur, has been fast rising in importance since the opening of the Ondāl-Sainthiā line, and has attracted a considerable trade, especially in rice. The chief local industries are the manufacture of brass and bell-metal articles and ironwork.

Dubrājpur is a picturesque place surrounded by tanks, on the banks of which are numerous tall palm trees. It contains a number of Saiva temples, among which may be mentioned Akhay Dāsi's temple with some interesting carving, and the Sivālaya, a group of five shrines in the Mahtopārā quarter, which is set in the midst of a group of oleanders, the pink bloom of

which looks well against the vermilion-stained friezes. Their foundations and the platform are made of a porous red stone found at Sālkunda. The most interesting feature of Dubrājpur, however, is a number of granitic rocks found both in the village and its neighbourhood, which are described as follows by Captain Sherwill :—"Within the town, and immediately to the south of it, large, naked, picturesque masses of granite and gneiss protrude through the soil, occupying altogether about a square mile of space. The granite is grey, composed of glassy quartz, pink and grey felspar, and black mica. In the centre of the mass a large block of granite is seen united with a mass of gneiss. The gneiss is composed of the same materials as the granite, and adheres to it at an angle of 45°. The immediate junction of the two rocks is not perceptible; but six inches in width covers the doubtful belt where the two distinct rocks appear fused together. On one side of the doubtful space the granite is quite distinct, and on the other the gneiss with its perfect stratification. From the summit of the rock, which is about 60 feet high, a good view is obtained of the surrounding country. The Parasnāth mountain is seen at a distance of 75 miles in a south-westerly direction, the Rājmahāl Hills to the north and the Pānchet Hill to the south-west. One of the large hemispherical masses of granite, six feet in height and thirty in circumference, has been covered over with a flat-roofed temple, and a masonry drain built round the block, which is worshipped as Mahādeva. Brāhmans are attached to the temple, and offerings of flowers and Ganges water are made to this extraordinary object of worship."

The first appearance of such rocks as one travels from Surī is at place called Kachujor, where some isolated blocks lie scattered here and there. As Dubrājpur is approached, these blocks appear in a large numbers, half buried in the ground, and they are scattered all over Dubrājpur and its precincts, the houses of the villagers being built among them wherever an open space is found. In one place to the south-west of the public offices, and only a few yards away from the roadside, they cluster thickly together and assume much greater dimensions and height, some rising to an altitude of 40 to 55 feet high. Several blocks are placed curiously one upon another at various inclinations resting obliquely on very small contact surfaces. The two most remarkable of these rocks are those known popularly as Māmā and Bhāgina (uncle and nephew), which are perched on a huge boulder some 30 feet high, at what appears a dangerous angle, and rise above it to the height of 16 and 18 feet respectively. A larger block, which is perched on the same huge boulder and raises its head about

five feet higher than the two already mentioned, has a small hollow in it, large enough for a man to take shelter in. A small rudely formed door-frame was placed some 20 years ago on the outer side of the hollow and set in some brick-work by a hermit, who dwelt there for some time. In the vicinity about a dozen blocks rise abruptly to the height of 54 feet. On the highest of these rocks is some circular masonry work, said to have been constructed about forty years ago by the manager of the Hetampur Estate when it was under the Court of Wards. Apparently he intended to have a airy retreat here, the ascent of the rock being effected by a temporary wooden ladder.

At the base of the rocks to the west are the ruins of a temple of Mahādeva under the title of Pahāreswar, *i.e.*, the god of the hill. It is said that the block of stone, which is enshrined here as an emblem of the god, was formerly on the top of one of the rocks, and the people standing at its base used to worship it. There was a natural division between it and the main rock, and one day it tumbled down during a violent storm, crushing a priest to death. The people ascribed the accident to a desire on the part of Siva to have a temple built for him, and accordingly one Sankar Rāj of Dubrājpur erected a shrine over the fallen rock, which is believed to be the image of Siva and is regularly worshipped. Another legend is that when the stone block representing the god was on the top of the rock, a devotee ascended the rock every day to worship him. When he became old and could no longer climb up the rock, the stone block representing Siva dropped down one night. That same night the god appeared to the devotee in a dream and was heard to say: "You have become very old and feel much difficulty in going up the rock, so I have come down that you may worship me without trouble." In front of the temple is another building called Nāt Mandir, which was erected about 50 years ago by one Kenārām Datta of Dubrājpur. It is said that his wife being barren, he offered to raise a temple for Siva if he was blessed with a son. His wish was granted, and he fulfilled his vow by erecting a temple in front of the former one.

The tradition regarding the origin of the rocks as a whole is as follows:—When Rām Chandra, the hero of the Rāmāyana, was about to attack Rāvana, king of Ceylon, he found it necessary to throw a bridge across the straits for the conveyance of his troops. He accordingly drove in his aerial chariot to the Himālayas, picked up what stones he needed, and drove back. As he was passing Dubrājpur, his horses took fright and tilted up the chariot, so that some of the stones fell out.

There is another legend to the effect that they were collected at the command of Siva by Viswakarmā, the artificer of gods, to erect in one night a second Kāsi or Benāres. When he had gathered the rocks and was about to commence work, day dawned, and he was obliged to vanish, not choosing to expose himself to the gaze of the public. There are also legends connected with some of the separate rocks. On one of the boulders a little to the east of the temple of Pahāreswar there is a hollow said to contain water all the year round. In this hollow, it is believed, Sītā once washed her head, and since then the water has been considered sacred. Close by is a place where she is said to have sat down. One of the wheels of her aerial chariot also left its mark on a boulder. Another boulder has a long line running across its surface as if a narrow stream of water had passed over it. Tradition says that it was caused by Rāvana answering a call of nature.

Most of the rocks are very much fractured, splintered and disintegrated as the result of rain and heat. The whole place is destitute of vegetation, and, except for a few stunted banyans and some scrubby shrubs which have taken root here and there, the rocks are quite bare.

About five miles south-west of Dubrājpur there are the remains of a *garh* or mud fort at Krishnanagar or Kishannagar said to have been built by the Rājā of Rājnagar as a residence for his Rānī. Two miles west of Dubrājpur, there is a large tank called Dantindighi, said to have been excavated by Khagaditya Rājā, who had a palace at the adjoining village of Khagra, which contains a temple of Khageswar Siva. The tank is called Dantindīghī, as there is a temple of the goddess Danteswarī on its bank.

Ekchakra.—A village in the Mayūreswar thāna of the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision. Here the five Pāndava brothers are said to have taken refuge during their exile, and legend relates that here Bhīm killed a monster named Hirambak and married his sister Hirimba, by whom he begot a son called Ghatotkach, who, as related in the *Mahābhārata*, played a conspicuous part in the battle of Kurukshettra. Another account is that Ekchakra was a tract of country comprising Nimai, Ghordahā, Ganutiā and Kotāsur, and that Bhīm resided there with his wife and mother. Kotāsur is said to have been the dwelling place of a monster named Bakāsur, whom Bhīm slew.

Ganutiā.—A village situated on the north bank of the river Mor, 11 miles east of the Sainthia railway station, in the Mayūreswar thāna of the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision. Population (1901)

407. Ganutiā is the centre of the silk industry of Bīrbhūm, containing a large silk factory of the Bengal Silk Company. The villagers in the neighbourhood are engaged in the rearing of silk-worms, the cocoons being either wound off at home or sold to the factory. A factory was first started here in 1786 by Mr. Frushard, of whose fortunes an account has been given in Chapter II. On the death of Mr. Frushard it was taken over by Mr. Cheap, the Commercial Resident, and here he died and was buried in 1828. The estate was then put in charge of Mr. Shakespeare, who acted as Commercial Resident till 1835, when the manufacture of silk by the East India Company ceased. It was afterwards taken over by the Collector, and was managed as a *khās mahāl* till it was bought by the Bengal Silk Company, which carries on the manufacture of silk in the original buildings. The factory of Mr. Frushard, rebuilt several times, still forms the most imposing mercantile edifice in Bīrbhūm. It is situated on rising ground on the bank of the Mor, defended from the river by buttresses, and surrounded by a high and many-angled wall, enclosing a considerable area.

Garbhabās.—*See* Birchandrapur.

Hetampur.—A village in the Surī subdivision situated a mile south-east of Dubrājpur and 14 miles south-west of Surī. It contains the residence of Rājā Rām Ranjan Chakravarti Bahādur, the owner of the largest estate (known as the Hetampur Rāj) in the district. The founder of the family was one Muralidhar Chakravarti, a Srotriya Brāhman, whose grandson Rādhā Nāth amassed a fortune which enabled him to purchase a large property in 1796, apparently on the sale of the estate of the Rājā of Bīrbhūm's estate. The Rājā Rahādur succeeded to the estate in 1862 at the age of 11, and the estate was under the management of the Court of Wards during his minority. He received the title of Rājā in 1874, and in recognition of his liberality and public spirit during the famine of 1874 was granted the title of Rājā Bahādur in 1877. The village contains a High school, a Sanskrit *tol* and a charitable dispensary maintained by him. There is also a second grade college, similarly maintained by him, which is called the Krishna Chandra College after his father, Krishna Chandra Chakravarti. This is the only college in the district.

Ilāmbazar.—A village in the Bolpur thāna of the Surī subdivision, situated 24 miles south of Surī on the bank of the Ajai river, which here forms the boundary between Bīrbhūm and Burdwān. Population (1901) 1,815. It contains a police

out-post, a post office and a fine inspection bungalow situated in park-like surroundings. The village is a trading centre of some importance, from which three metalled roads radiate, to the Bolpur, Panighar and Dubrājpur railway stations. It is noted for the manufacture of lac ornaments and toys, but this industry has declined, the large lac-producing factories having been closed. A class of people called Nuris still, however, manufacture lac, lac bangles and toys; it is reported that there are now 40 families at work, of which three make toys, the females of the other families dyeing cotton with shellac dye. Formerly tusser silk and cotton weaving were also flourishing industries, but the former is now practically extinct, and the latter has lost much of its importance. A part of the village, near the thāna, is still called Tulāpatti from the fact that it used to be the centre of the trade in cotton.

Ilāmbazar was at one time the head-quarters of a large European firm known as Erskine & Co., of which the following account has been prepared from a note contributed by a gentleman of the district. The founder of the firm was Mr. David Erskine, who, after working at Surul, set up an indigo factory at Doranda, 6 miles west of the latter place, and, as his business prospered, established another at Ilāmbazar. Other indigo factories were started in Bīrbhūm, Bānkurā and Burdwān, and, after the death of Mr. David Erskine, his sons opened several collieries in those three districts, which were worked by the Bīrbhūm Coal Co., and subsequently by the New Bīrbhūm Coal Co. Besides the manufacture of indigo, the firm, which was known as Erskine & Co., took up the manufacture of lac and also acquired zamīndāri property. The lac factory and indigo concern at Ilāmbazar were purchased from it by Mr. W. W. Farquharson, a nephew of one of the Erskines, and Mr. Campbell of Tirhut, and the firm started by them continued to carry on business at Ilāmbazar for several years. Several causes operated, however, against its prosperity, *e.g.*, the fall of prices, litigation, mismanagement, etc., and eventually, in 1880, its factories passed into the hands of the Official Assignee, the concern was wound up, and its buildings sold, the Ilāmbazar factory with the residential buildings and out-houses being purchased by Rai Bagula Nanda Mukharji. The building now occupied by the post office was an outhouse, which Government acquired, and the present inspection bungalow was the residence of the Erskine family, in which Mrs. David Erskine lived for some years after her husband's death. To the north of the latter building is the Erskine cemetery.

Jaljol.—A village in the Bolpur thāna of the Surī subdivision containing the temple of Kangkālī. The latter is claimed as one of the 52 *piths* or sacred places where a part of the dismembered body of Satī fell—in this case the waist (*kānkāl*), whence the name.

Kenduli.—A village, also called Kendwa Billa or Jayadeva Kenduli, in the Bolpur thāna of the Surī subdivision, situated on the north bank of the river Ajai, a few miles west of Ilāmbazar and about 22 miles south of Surī. Population (1901) 774. It is renowned as the birth-place of the great Sanskrit poet Jayadeva, who flourished in the 12th century A.D. and composed the well-known *Gita Govinda*, a Sanskrit lyrical poem in praise of Rādhikā and Krishna. An annual fair in his honour is held in the village on the last day of the Hindu month *Paus* and the two first days of *Māgh*, corresponding with the middle of January, and is attended by upwards of 50,000 pilgrims, mostly Vaishnavas. The most famous legend connected with the life of Jayadeva is to the effect that one day, when he was writing his poem, he came to a passage in which Krishna had to ask his beloved Rādhikā to place her foot on his head. As a staunch Hindu, he could not persuade himself to write the verse. After thinking over the subject for some hours, he went away to bathe, leaving his writing materials behind him. In the meantime, the god Krishna assumed the form of Jayadeva, and coming to his house, as if after bathing, ate, and then wrote out and completed the verse. Jayadeva's wife, Padmāvatī, then went to eat the food he had left on the plate. When he returned, Jayadeva was astonished to find his wife Padmāvatī eating the food left on the plate, because as a modest wife she never dined before her husband. Padmāvatī, too, was astonished to find her husband returning a second time from bathing. She told him what had happened, and they both went to look at the poem which Jayadeva had been writing and found that the verse which he had composed, but would not venture to write, had been written in its proper place. Husband and wife were thereby convinced that the god himself had come and had written the verse in order to relieve his favoured Jayadeva of his difficulty.

The body of Jayadeva was buried and not burnt after his death, and his tomb is still to be seen at Kenduli, surrounded by beautiful groves and trees. A square piece of stone, said to have been used by Jayadeva as his seat at the time of worship, is preserved in a small hut near the Ajai river. The village also contains a temple of Rādhā Benode, commonly known as Jayadeva's temple, which, according to an inscription on a tablet, was built by the mother of Mahārājā Kīrti Chānd Bahādur of Burdwān, and dedicated to the god in Sakābdā

1605, *i.e.*, over 200 years ago. Another temple was also erected by the Mahant of Kenduli a few years ago.

Khustigri.—A village in the Surī subdivision situated 12 miles south of Surī. This village is connected with the life of a Muhammadan saint called Saiyad Shāh Abdullah Kirmāni of Bīrbhūm. Shāh Abdullah, it is said, when young, left Kirmān in Persia, his native country, and visited Shāh Arzāni, a Muhammadan saint, who died at Patna during the reign of Shāh Jahān in A. H. 1140 or 1630 A. D. Shāh Arzāni directed him to go to Bengal, and on his departure gave him a tooth-pick of *chambeli* wood, telling him to remain at that place where he found the tooth-pick became fresh and green. Shāh Abdullah arrived in Bīrbhūm, and stayed at Bargāon, near Bhadia, where he performed several miracles (*karāmāt*). But as the tooth-pick remained dry, he went to Khustigri. While in this village he one night put the tooth-pick into his pillow, and on awakening found it was fresh and green. He then planted it, and it soon became a large tree, which is still seen. Shāh Abdullah is especially renowned for the power which he had over serpents, and now-a-days in Bīrbhūm his name is repeated in formulas of enchantment. His *dargāh* is in the hands of his descendants, and is visited by numerous pilgrims.*

Lābpur.—A village in the Surī subdivision, situated on the Surī-Kātwā road about 7 miles to the east of Ahmadpur railway station. Population (1901) 750. It contains a High English school, a Middle English school, a girls' school, a Sanskrit *tol*, a charitable dispensary, a sub-registry office, a police-station and a post-office. The village is regarded as a *pithasthān*, *i.e.*, one of the 52 sacred spots on which portions of Satī's dead body fell when dismembered by the discus of Vishnu; it is said to derive its name from the fact that her lips fell here. The most noteworthy building in the village is the temple of the goddess Phullara, attached to which there is an enclosure for feeding jackals, which are regarded with veneration as animals sacred to the goddess. Before presenting rice *bhog* to the goddess, a portion of it is given to the jackals, which are quite tame and advance without hesitation from the adjoining jungle, answering to the call of the name Rupi-Supi. The remainder of the food left by the jackals is taken as *prasād* by Hindus. Near the temple there is a large dried up lake named Daldali, about 300 *bighās* in area, but there is no water in it. It is so called (from *dal-dal*, a quaking quagmire) because if any one stands in any part of it a large portion oscillates.

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* Proceeding, A. S. B., 1870, page 307.

There is a tradition that this lake was the Devī Daha of the Rāmâyana, from which Râm Chandra got blue lotuses for the worship of Durgà.

Makhdumnagar.—A village in thāna Mayūreswar of the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision. It contains the tomb of a Muhammadan saint Makhdum Saiyid Shāh Zahir-ud-din, who is said to have flourished in the 16th century and married in one of the families of the Nawābs of Gaur. He is credited with having had the miraculous power of curing all sorts of diseases, and his tomb is frequented by votaries who come for relief from their ailments.

Margrām.—A village in the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision, situated on the river Dwārka 4 miles east of Rāmpur Hāt, with which it is connected by a metalled road. It is the largest village in the district and approaches Surī in population, having 6,518 inhabitants in 1901. It is now a purely rural township, but before the opening of the railway was a trading town, owing its importance to the confluence of the Dwārka with the Bhāgirathi. With the adjacent villages of Baswa and Bishnupur, it is the centre of an indigenous silk spinning and weaving industry.

Muhammadbazar.—A village in the Surī subdivision situated 7 miles north-east of Surī. The village contains a post office and police outpost, and has a bi-weekly market. In it are several tanks, old buildings and mosques which point to its past prosperity. At Kharia close by a large cattle market is held. Chalk and lime-stone are quarried in the neighbourhood and largely exported.

Iron works were established here by Mr. D. C. Mackay about 1850 and were carried on till his death some 10 years latter. They were then sold and became the property of a native, who appears to have worked them at long intervals. In September 1874 they passed into the hands of Messrs. Burn & Co., and an account published in 1876 states that they contained a blast furnace capable of producing 5 tons of pig-iron a day, a vertical engine of about 40 horse-power for supplying the blast, a second engine driving two fan blasts for the supply of wind to a couple of cupola furnaces (which used to turn out large quantities of railway chairs), bungalows for the manager and his assistant, blacksmith's shops, workmen's quarters, store godown, etc.* The company, however, made little progress in its attempts to work iron here, and the works, which contained machinery worth a lakh of rupees, have been unused for over 20 years.

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* Statistical Reporter, 1876, page 489.

Deochā, a large village about 4 miles north of Muhammadbazar, also used to be a centre for the manufacture of pig-iron. In 1851-52 there were at Deochā about 30 furnaces at work for the reduction of the ore into pig-iron and as many more for refining it; and when at work each furnace could turn out 20 to 25 maunds of pig-iron weekly.

Murarai.—A village in the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision, situated 9 miles north of Nalhāti. Population (1901) 1,071. It contains a police station, an Upper Primary school and a railway station, and it is a centre of the local rice trade.

Nagar or Rājnagar.—A village and head-quarters of a thāna in the Surī subdivision, situated 15 miles west of Surī, with which it is connected by a metalled road. Population (1901) 3,845. It contains a police outpost, post office and inspection bungalow. Historically this place is one of the most interesting in the district, for before the Muhammadan conquest it was the capital of the Hindu Rājās of Bīrbhūm and later of the Pathān Rājās referred to in Chapter II. Once a place of considerable consequence and note, it has now fallen into decay, and its site is covered by crumbling houses, mouldering mosques, and weed choked tanks. The ancestral palace of the Rājās has almost fallen into ruins, and the family has become impoverished. Their last home was sold for debt in 1888, and in the same year the titular Rājā, Muhammad Johar-ul-Zamān Khān, who succeeded in 1855, died a pauper, leaving his children destitute. North of Nagar and buried in a heavy jungle are the remains of an ancient mud fort said to have been built in the 18th century as a defence against the Marāthās. The chief defence to the town, however, was a great earth-work thus described in Captain Sherwill's Revenue Survey Report of the Bīrbhūm district:—

" The famous Nagar wall or entrenchment, which was thrown up by one of the Nagar Rājās, extends in an irregular and broken figure around the town for a distance of 32 miles. Its average distance from Nagar is four miles. It is in good preservation to this day (1852), and is not as represented in Arrowsmith's large map of India, a connected entrenchment enclosing the town and the surrounding country. It is merely thrown across the approaches to Nagar, and usually flanks and crosses all the main routes to the town, there being from a quarter of a mile to six miles of the entrenchment on either side of the road. The entrenchment, which was constructed to ward off the attacks of the Marāthās, is from 12 to 18 feet in height with a broad ditch on the outside, formed by digging out the earth for the parapet. Each entrance upon the main roads was guarded by a small

outwork defended by wooden gates supported on stone jambs, the outwork being capable of holding about a hundred soldiers. The embankment itself, as well as a few hundred yards of the country both on the outside and inside of the gateways, is covered with a thick tangled jungle. The whole thing was a foolish and expensive piece of work, as the well-mounted Marāthā had only to ride four or five miles to the flank of the entrenchment, and thus find an easy approach to Nagar. The entrances were all called *ghāts*, and retain their name to this day."

Since the above was written the process of decay has gone on rapidly. The *ghāts* or gateways have ceased to be capable of defence, and many parts of the wall have been washed almost level with the ground by the annual rains. The *ghātwāls* who formerly guarded them held their lands rent-free on condition of service as highway *chaukīdārs* till a few years ago, when their lauds were resumed by Government. Captain Sherwill's criticism as to the uselessness of this fortification is of doubtful accuracy. Judging by the condition of the neighbouring country even at the present time, an attempt to out-flank it was most probably rendered futile by impassable forest.

In the village itself is a large artificial tank or lake called Kālī Daha with a large tree in the centre surrounded by a wall; it is said to have been excavated by the Hindu Rājās and dedicated to the goddess Kālī. According to the tradition related in the article on Bīrsinghpur, her image abode there till the tank was polluted by the victorious Muhammadans. It then made its way through the bank to the Pushkarni stream, along which it floated to Bīrsinghpur. In corroboration of this legend the villagers point to a large temple (now the property of the Burdwān Rāj), a big break in the bank of the tank, and a passage leading to the river. On three sides of the Kalī Daha tank there are the ruins of the former palaces of the Muhammadan Rājās of Nagar, which clearly must once have been extensive buildings. In front of the ruins of the Imāmbāra stands a fine mosque in a state of good preservation, which is still used by the local Muhammadans. A little to the south are the ruins of another old mosque called the Motichor Masjid, which had 12 domes, but some have fallen down. It is reported that the brick-work façade in front is of excellent design and that its workmanship is equal if not superior to that of the Sonator Math in Surī town. Among other ruins may be mentioned the Naubatkhānā of the Bīr Rājās, as the Hindu Rājās of Nagar were called, the Phulbāgān or flower garden, and the burial place of the Muhammadan Rājās.

Nagarī.—A village in the Surī subdivision, situated five miles west of Surī. An annual *melā* called Brahmadaitya is held here, the centre of attraction being a tree haunted by the ghost of a Brāhman. It is believed that worship at this spot ensures cure from disease, the fulfilment of a wish, etc.; the particular rite observed by each pilgrim consists of lifting up a handful of earth in one place and dropping it in another.

Nalhāti.—A village in the north-east of the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision. Population (1901) 2,636. It contains a railway station on the Loop line of the East Indian Railway, which forms a junction from which a branch line runs to Azīmganj. The village also has a police station, sub-registry office, Middle English school, inspection bungalow, and a charitable dispensary (outdoor), which is maintained by the District Board. The place is a centre of the trade in rice, and has greatly increased in importance during the last 30 years, a new bazar having sprung up round the station half a mile from the old village, while a considerable manufacture of brass and bell-metal ware is carried on. It is traditionally said to have been the capital of a Hindu monarch, Rājā Nala, the ruins of whose palace are still traceable on a hillock close to the town called Nalhātī Zila, where also a sanguinary battle is said to have been fought between the Rājā and the conquering Musalmāns; below the hillock there is a cold spring. According to another and more popular tradition it is so called because the *nala* or throat of Satī fell here when Vishnu cut her off bit by bit from Siva's shoulder. The temple is, however, known as Lalāteswarī, and another report states that it was the *lalāt* or forehead that fell here. In any case the village claims to be a *pithasthān*, *i.e.*, one of the 52 places where parts of Satī's body felt.

Nannur.—A village in thāna Sākulipur of the Surī subdivision, situated about 24 miles east of Surī. It is celebrated as being the birth-place of Chandīdās, a famous lyric poet of the 14th century. Mr. R. C. Dutt mentions the following traditions regarding his life:—"The traditions current about the life of Chandīdās give us some clue to the nature of the rivalry which has ever existed in Bengal between the Vaishnava and Sākta creeds. Chandīdās, as his name implies, was by birth a Sākta, *i.e.*, a worshipper of Chandī, Durgā or Saktī, as the goddess is variously called. It is said that in his early youth, Chandīdās worshipped an image of Saktī which was called Bishalakshmī, and the poet often addresses the goddess in his works. As may well be imagined, the conversion of Chandīdās to Vaishnavism has given rise to many tales. It is said that, on a certain day, he

saw a beautiful flower floating on the river, where he had gone to bathe. He took it up and went to worship Bishalakshmī. The goddess appeared in person, and asked for the flower that she might place it on her head. The worshipper was awe-struck, and enquired what strange virtue the flower could possess, so as to induce the goddess to appear in person, and to wish to keep it on her head, instead of allowing the poet to place it at her feet. The goddess replied: "Foolish child, my master has been worshipped with that flower; it is not fit for my feet; let me hold it on my head." "And who may thy Master be?" enquired the poet. Krishna, was the reply; and from that day the poet exchanged the worship of the goddess for that of Krishna. It is scarcely necessary to add that later Vaishnava writers have taken advantage of Chandīdās's conversion to prove the superiority of their deity, and have invented this fable. One thing, however, is plain, namely, that the rivalry between the two creeds has prevailed in Bengal, as elsewhere in India, from remote times.

"Chandīdās has immortalized the washerwoman Rāmi in his poems, and numerous are the stories told about their loves. The poet was informed that he could not perform *Sadhan* till he had a fair companion, not by marriage, not for money, but one to whom his heart would be spontaneously drawn at the first sight. Our poet went out in search of such a person, and it was not long before he found one. A washerwoman was washing clothes on the river side, the poet saw her and was fascinated. Day after day he would go to the river side, with a fishing rod as a pretext and sat there, gazing on the woman. Words followed and love ensued, and the poet left his home and parents, and ever afterwards lived with Rāmi, a washerwoman as she was by caste.

"Chandīdās was a renowned singer. One day, it is said, he went to a neighbouring village Matipur to sing with his paramour; and when they were returning, the house in which they had taken shelter fell down, and they were both crushed and died in each other's arms. The story has perhaps little foundation in fact."*

Patharchapuri.—A village in thāna Surī of the Surī subdivision. It was the residence of a Muhammadan saint, named Shāh Mahbub, but commonly known as Data Sāhib, who is reported to have died in 1299 B.S., corresponding to 1892 A.D. It is said that he was gifted with miraculous power, and used to cure dangerous diseases by applying ashes or grass; and it is alleged that he could remain under water throughout the year. His tomb in the village is frequented by many votaries.

* Literature of Benga(181 99), pp. 29, 31.

Phulbera.—A village in the Dubrājpur thāna of the Surī subdivision, containing the temple of Danteswarī. This is claimed as one of the 52 *piths* or sacred places where parts of the dismembered body of Satī fell—in this case the teeth (*dānta*): whence the name.

Rājnagar.—*See* Nagar.

Rāmpur Hāt.—Head-quarters of the subdivision of the same name, situated in 24° 10′ north latitude and 87° 47′ east longitude, on the East Indian Railway. Population (1901) 3,908. The town is prettily situated on the western slope of an undulation, which commands a distant view of the hills of the Santāl Parganas, and is a small place of increasing importance. The East Indian Railway have a locomotive depôt here, and a colony of engine drivers and firemen is quartered in a neat little settlement on the east of the line. Further east extending to the main road, which runs north and south, is the native quarter, formerly a mere country village, but now rapidly becoming a small town. The *hât* or market from which the place takes its name was situated about half a mile south of the town on the main road, but this bazar has gradually spread both along the main road towards the town and also along the road connecting it with the civil station and offices. The town contains the usual public offices found at a subdivisional head-quarters, two Munsifs' courts, a sub-jail, a sub-registry office, a high school, a model girls' school, and a charitable dispensary. It is a trade centre through which much of the commerce of the Santâl Parganas passes, and is connected with Dumka by a *pucca* road about 40 miles long.

Rāmpur Hāt Subdivision.—Northern subdivision of the district, lying between 23° 52′ and 24° 35′ N. and between 87° 35′ and 88° 2′ E., with an area of 645 square miles. It is bounded on the east and north-east by the Murshidābād district, on the west and north-west by the Santâl Parganas, and on the south by the Surī subdivision. The eastern portion of the subdivision presents the appearance of the ordinary alluvial plains of Lower Bengal. Proceeding towards the west, the ground rises and the surface consists of undulating beds of laterite. It has no hills, but one hillock called Lāl Pahāri to the west of Rāmpur Hāt town deserves mention, because most of the old buildings near Rāmpur Hāt and Mallārpur are built of stone quarried from it. There is also a small hillock on which a temple stands at Nalhāti. The soil is generally a light sandy loam requiring heavy manure. This is supplied by the detritus from the wooded uplands in some cases, and sometimes, but rarely, by silt from the rivers. As a rule,

however, the floods only deposit sand, and in consequence long embankments exist in many places.

The largest river of the subdivision is the Mor, which, however, nowhere intersects the subdivision but forms its southern boundary. It first touches upon the subdivision, at its southern corner at Pānchberia (opposite Sainthiā) and takes a winding course in an easterly direction, till at Rāmnagar it enters Murshidābād. The Dwārka enters the subdivision at Mallikpur and passes into the Murshidābād district on the east at Deara. The Brāhmanī enters the subdivision at Nārāyanpur and flows to the east passing through the Nalhāti thāna. The Bānsloi enters it at Kalīnagar and flows by Palsā into the Bhāgīrathī (opposite Jangipur). None of these streams are navigable except by small canoes, and by them only during freshets in the rainy season.

The subdivision was formerly part of Murshidābād and was transferred to Bīrbhūm in 1873. It comprises the four thānas of Rāmpur Hāt, Mayūreswar, Murarai and Nalhāti. It contains 1,336 villages, and its population was 366,352 in 1901, as compared with 328,025 in 1891, the density of population being 568 persons to the square mile.

Sainthiā.—A village in the Surī subdivision, situated on the Mor river, 11 miles east of Surī. Population (1901) 2,622. There is a railway station here on the Loop line of the East Indian Railway, which is a junction for a branch line to Ondāl. The village is also connected with the town of Surī by a metalled road and is an important trade centre. It contains a post and telegraph office and an inspection bungalow situated on the bank of the river Mor. Sainthiā was formerly an independent outpost, but this was abolished some years ago; since May 1909, however, it has been reconstituted an outpost of the Surī thana.

Supur.—A village in the Surī subdivision, situated six miles west of Bolpur. There was formerly a French factory here which was started in 1768, was abandoned in 1774, and was subsequently reoccupied. In 1787, the Magistrate of Bīrbhūm ordered the two Frenchmen in charge of it not to hoist the flag of their nation, and sent an Assistant Collector with orders to see it was taken down. Five years later the Magistrate took possession of the factory when war broke out between England and France, and it was subsequently placed under the control of Mr. Cheap, the Commercial Resident.

Tradition relates that Supur was the residence of a Hindu zamīndār, named Rājā Surat, and there is a lingam here known as Surateswar, which he is said to have worshipped, and ruins of

buildings have been found beneath the surface of the ground. It is further said that he made 100,000 sacrifices to Kāli, the place of sacrifice being therefore called Balipur, the modern Bolpur. He is said to have built a palace in the north west of the village. The legend regarding the Rājā is as follows:—In his young days he was cruel and vicious, but one night he had a dream, which made him abandon his evil courses. He dreamt that he came to a waste place covered with bones and there met the ghosts of all who had suffered at his hands, whether men he had killed or virgins he had outraged. He fled in terror, pursued by the grisly crowd, when a goddess appeared and told him that the only atonement for his sin was a life of virtue. The goddess was Durgā herself, and to appease her, Surat daily offered bloody sacrifices. When he was about to ascend to heaven, the numberless victims he had slain rose from the dead and barred the way. Durgā then appeared and told him that the slaughtered lives called for vengeance, and that he must atone for his crimes before being rewarded for his virtues. At this she vanished, and the victims falling on the Rājā beheaded him. After this he entered heaven in peace.

Other legends attach to the names of Iswar Rai and Bhagwān Rai, two skilful physicians, who settled in the village and gathered a thriving community round them. One of the tanks of Supur commemorates the story of a Kulīn girl who married one of their descendants. It is said that she went to this tank to bathe, and, as there was no regular bathing *ghāt*, her ankles and feet were covered with mud. Proud of the alliance with a Kulīn family, her father-in-law, Gunapati Rai, ordered a *ghāt* to be constructed, from which a brick-built pathway ran to his house; a portion of this pathway still remains. A less pleasing tradition attaches to what is known as the Jak tank. A descendant of Bhagwān Rai acquired immense wealth, but there was no one to whom it might justly pass. He determined, therefore, to have a boy entombed alive with his treasure, and for that purpose built a spacious mausoleum. He got hold of a fatherless young boy, and on an appointed day led him, after due ceremony, to the tomb in which he had placed his treasure. When the door was about to be shut for ever, the zamīndār asked his victim if there was anything in particular he would like to eat. The boy replied that he would like the first thing he saw in the morning. It so happened that the first thing he saw was a young calf, which he asked the zamīndār to kill and dress for him. As a Hindu, the latter could not comply with this request, and thereupon the disappointed boy invoked terrible curses upon him. The actual spot where the

tomb was raised is forgotten, but the villagers associate it with this tank, and those who live round it believe that at times they can hear the implications of the Jak (Sanskrit *Yaksha*), *i.e.*, the spirit of the dead boy.

Another interesting tradition is told about a pious Goswāmi, named Anand Chānd, who spent his life at Supur, exercising spiritual sway far and wide. At that time the Marāthās were ravaging the country, and having plundered the neighbouring villages and driven out their inhabitants, they marched on Supur. Anand Chānd placed himself at the head of the villagers, who were armed with bill-hooks, which they kept ready for the defence of their homes. The Marāthās surrounded the little force, when to their amazement the Goswāmi appeared in four places at once, mounted on a white charger. Struck with wonder at this miracle, and admiring his courage, the Marāthā leader withdrew and granted him a letter insuring the village against any further attack.

Another miracle ascribed to the Goswāmi is as follows:—A pious Maulvi, who himself had miraculous powers, hearing of the wonders he wrought, came to see him mounted on a tiger. Though his visitor was a Musalmān, the Goswāmi made him sit on his own bed and bade his servant place a *hookah* between them, saying that he recognized no distinctions that were not recognized by heaven. No sooner was this done, than both bed and *hookah* vanished in a flame of fire, and the Maulvi found himself safely sitting on another bed. On his return home, the Maulvi told what had happened, but one of his hearers would not believe. To test the powers of the Goswāmi, this sceptic went to him bringing pieces of beef as presents. As soon as he offered them to Anand Chānd, they were converted into large red lotuses.* Anand Chānd is said to have acquired considerable wealth, because whenever any Vaishnava died without issue, his property passed to the Goswāmi. He is evidently the same as the Anand Chānd referred to in Chapter II as a 'Ghussein' who let some land to the French for a factory in 1768.

Surī.—The principal town and administrative head-quarters of Bīrbhūm district, situated 2 miles south of the Mor river, with a railway station on the Ondāl-Sainthiā branch of the East Indian Railway. Population (1901) 8,692, including 6,282 Hindus, 2,3[illegible]2 Muhammadans, 78 Christians and 30 members of other religions. The town is situated on the eastern slope of a ridge, which runs along the south bank of the Mor, at the point where it subsides into the level country, and apart from its official

* Guru Lal Gupta, *Rural Sketches*, 1888.

status is of small importance. The civil station is picturesquely scattered over a park-like rising ground on the west of the town, which extends along either side of the Dumkā road. This road also passes for a mile through the European quarter, an open undulating neighbourhood, with houses standing far apart, surrounded by extensive grounds and connected by a net-work of broad metalled roads, lined by fine trees. In the centre of the town, along a street crossing this thoroughfare at right angles, is the chief bazar of the place, and round it on the north a small but dense cluster of houses and narrow lanes forms the nucleus of the urban area. With this exception, the houses are scattered and do not extend to any great distance from the high road. The principal streets have masonry drains, but their outlets are generally into some of the tanks, which exist in hundreds in every spare corner of the town. A large part on the east of the town is covered with *pān* gardens and jungle. The houses are generally thatched and built of laterite earth, which after exposure to the air hardens almost to the consistency of stone.

The most noticeable building in the town is a carved brick temple in Sonātor known as the Rās Mancha. It is a fine specimen of the latest class of temple architecture in Bengal, and the carvings over the entrance, which represent almost all the members of the Hindu pantheon, are described by the Archæological Surveyor as being among the best specimens of the kind in the province. The cemetery, which is situated to the south of the Barabāgān, contains a monument to the memory of John Cheap, which records the fact that he entered the Bengal Civil Service in 1782, was for 41 years Commercial Resident in Bīrbhūm, and died in 1828 in the 62nd year of his age. The site of a summer palace of Bīr Rājâs, marked by a few grassy mounds, is pointed out in Husainābād near the Collector's residence.

The town contains the usual courts and public offices found at a district head-quarters, a town hall, a public library (opened in 1900), a veterinary dispensary, a charitable dispensary, and the Lady Curzon Zanāna Hospital. The chief educational institution is the Government Zilā School. An agricultural exhibition called the the Surī Cattle and Produce Show, which was instituted for the improvement of local cattle and vegetable produce, is held in a mango garden, called the Barabāgān, within the municipality every year in January or February and is attended by several thousands.

The chief industry of Surī is the manufacture of palanquins

and furniture. At Alunda, two miles distant from the town striped cotton table covers and bedsheets, towels, white table cloths, mosquito-nets and other coarse cloth are produced. Tusser reeling, tusser weaving and cotton weaving are also carried on in the large village of Kālīpur-Karidha, a mile west of Surī. *Bāfta* (mixed tusser and cotton cloth) said to be in no way inferior to the *bāfta* of Bhāgalpur is also produced at Karidha.

The name Surī is reported to be a contraction of Sihurī.

Surī Subdivision.—Southern subdivision of the district, lying between 23° 33′ and 24° 7′ N. and between 87° 10′ and 87° 58′ E. with an area of 1,107 square miles. It is bounded on the north by the Murshidābād district, the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision and the Santāl Parganas; on the east by the Murshidābād and Burdwān districts; on the south by Burdwān; and on the west by Burdwān and the Santhāl Parganas. The east and south of the subdivision resemble the alluvial plains of Bengal with occasional patches of laterite and forest, but towards the west and north the ground rises and the surface is marked by undulating uplands of an average height of two to three hundred feet above sea-level, which are often covered by small *sāl* forests. Although deforestation is going on rapidly, the country is still fairly well wooded, *bar* (*Ficus indica*), *pipal* (*Ficus religiosa*), mango, bamboo *and tāl* (*Borassus flabellifer*) being frequently found. One special feature of the subdivision is the number of tanks, with their banks studded with high palm trees, which are found in and about any village of considerable size.

The subdivision is drained by several rivers, streams and rivulets passing over sandy beds or through narrow channels, which are swollen by freshets during the rainy season, but remain almost dry during the rest of the year. Some of these are subject to floods which deposit sand, from which the neighbouring fields are protected by embankments; while in a few the water is stored up after the rains for purposes of irrigation by means of cross dams. The largest of the rivers is the Ajai, which nowhere intersects the subdivision, but forms its southern boundary. A few narrow streams, like the Hinglā, and other minor *nullahs* or rivulets drain a small tract of country to the south into the Ajai. The general slope of the rest of the country is towards the east, and the drainage of the land passes through a number of streams like the Sāl or Kopā, the Bakreswar, the Kānā Nadī, etc., into the Mor, which is the only other river of any size in the subdivision. The Ondāl-Sainthiā Chord line of railway, which has been recently opened, intersects the subdivision from east to west, while the Loop line traverses the eastern portion.

The population was 535,928 in 1901, as against 470,229 in 1891, the density being 484 persons to the square mile. There are 1,981 villages and one town, Surī, the head-quarters. For administrative purposes it is divided into five thānas, viz., Bolpur with the Ilāmbazar outpust, Dubrājpur with the Khairāsol outpost, Lābpur, Sākulipur and Surī with the Muhammad-bazar, Rājnagar and Sainthiā outposts.

Surul.—A village in the south of the Surī subdivision, situated three miles west of Bolpur and about five miles north of the Ajai river. Population (1901) 1,558. The village is noteworthy as having been the site of a commercial residency under Mr. John Cheap, whose work has been described at length in Chapter II. After the East India Company gave up its mercantile dealings in 1835, the residency was abandoned and allowed to fall into decay. The ruins cover the top of a small hill, and though they are becoming every year more difficult to trace, the extent of the original building can still be seen.

Tārāpur.—A village in the Rāmpur Hāt thāna of the Rāmpur Hāt subdivision. It is said to be so called because the eye-balls (*tārā*) of Satī fell here. Others say that Tārāpur is not a *pith*, but that the place owes its sanctity to the fact that the sage Basistha here worshipped the goddess Satī in the form of Tārā. The common locāl opinion, however, is that it is really a *pith* and that Basistha selected this place for worshipping Satī because it was a *pith*. The village contains a temple dedicated to Tārā, the origin of which is accounted for by the following legend, from which again the place is somewhat inconsistently said to derive its name. A man whom business called to Murshidabād, being benighted and overcome by hunger, stopped near a mango grove in a village called Chandīpur, situated at the foot of the hillock on which the present temple stands. He lost his way to the village itself, and through fear of ghosts and goblins became insensible. As he was a Sākta (a follower of Saktī), the goddess protected him from the attacks of the jackals and dogs by which the garden was infested, it having been, as it still is, a place for the cremation of bodies (*shasān*). Now the garden was within the zemīndāri of Rānī Bhawānī of Putiyā, a lady celebrated for her liberality and piety. The goddess appeared to her in a dream, and directed her to erect a temple near the mango grove in her honour. Within a year the temple was erected and dedicated to the goddess, the name Tārāpur being selected because the traveller, when he recovered his senses in the morning, cried out "Tārā," "Tārā,"

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